Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-TWO • NUMBER FIVE • NOVEMBER 1986

The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name

Norman Podhoretz

Shades of Containment
Steven R. Sturm

"And That's What I Like About the South"
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Middle East Perplexities
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Lionel Trilling and His Critics
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Nicaraguan Journey
Stephen Schwartz

The Powerful Simplifiers
John P. Sisk

Books in Review: Fernanda Eberstadt/Jaroslav Pelikan/ Edward O. Wilson/Daniel Casse/Harvey Klehr/David Gress

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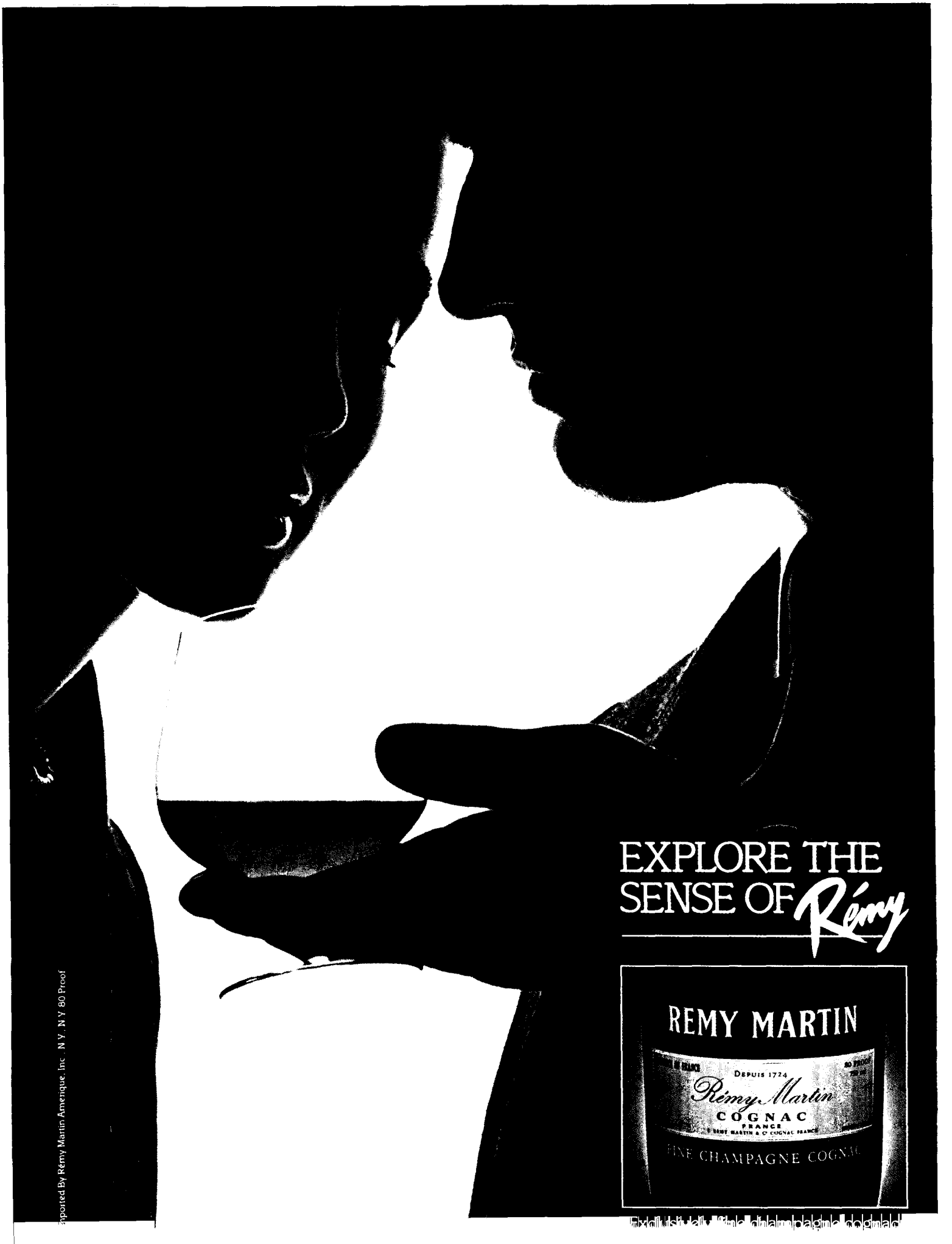

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Letters from Readers

"Peace Education"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

André Ryerson's attack on the curriculum unit *Choices* prepared by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and the National Education Association (NEA) ["The Scandal of 'Peace Education,'" June] is an obvious hatchet job prepared by an individual with no training or experience in the education of middle-school students. It is noteworthy only for its serious omissions, misrepresentations, and misunderstandings of the context within which the unit is used.

Mr. Ryerson's lack of pedagogical expertise is clearly evidenced by his ignorance of middle-school curriculum. He suggests that our two-week, one-hour per day unit is deficient because we do not give a full accounting of the causes and consequences of World War II or a history of the Soviet Union and its malevolent actions around the world. Implicit in his criticism is the charge that the authors of our unit were purposefully trying to paint an image of the United States as the principal villain in the creation and escalation of the nuclear arms race. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Unlike Mr. Ryerson, the authors of the curriculum unit share a wealth of experience in the development of curriculum material, and were all well aware that any standard junior-high syllabus for grades seven through nine includes a host of semester and/or year-long courses on history, civics, and science. Any reasonably competent school system should already be providing its students with a solid overview of the reasons for and consequences of America's involvement in World War II and the profound differences between the Soviet and American political and social systems. Our unit was intended to supplement material presented in those courses with a specific look at issues relevant to the nuclear arms race and alternatives to prevent nuclear war. In contrast to Mr. Ryerson, our presumption was and is that teachers are trained professionals, capable of introducing this kind of controversial material into the classroom without ignoring the overall context within which it must be taught.

Mr. Ryerson also suggests that our curriculum unit was designed to create fear in the minds of the nation's young and that we were insensitive in our presentation of facts regarding the destructive power of nuclear weapons. Had Mr. Ryerson taken the time to contact the Union of Concerned Scientists and discuss the development of the unit, he would have discovered that preparation of the unit involved a lengthy and extensive testing program. In fact, a draft of the unit was pilot-tested in forty-five classrooms in thirty-four states prior to its publication in final form. A principal purpose in conducting this test program was to evaluate alternatives for the treatment of what we recognized could be very disturbing material. Upon completion of the testing program, we incorporated a number of suggestions and changes made by teachers who had actually used the curriculum. At no time, either during the testing program or thereafter, have we seen any evidence that the unit has caused any emotional harm to students. To the contrary, we suspect that, given a choice, students would rather learn that there are alternatives to preventing the horrible outcome of a nuclear war, than be denied any opportunity to deal with the subject at all.

Mr. Ryerson also charges that we manipulated federal budget data in order to give a distorted view of the tradeoffs between spending on defense programs and social programs. In fact, the data were taken directly from the FY1987 budget proposed by the Reagan administration at the time the unit was prepared. It is the Reagan administration that has overseen a massive shifting of federal money from civilian to defense programs, not the Union of Concerned Scientists. Our use of this data was merely to demonstrate a trend in progress, not to mislead the nation's students.

Finally, Mr. Ryerson has misunderstood or consciously misrepresented the intent of the final lesson of the unit. In this lesson, students are encouraged to learn how a democracy works, surely something that Mr. Ryerson and the editors of COMMENTARY should find agreeable. It is suggested that students seek out the views of Congressmen

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and others on nuclear-weapons policy and arms control. They are encouraged to learn about ". . . the role the military plays in your community," not to mount a protest, but because students should learn how defense and economic issues are intertwined. There is absolutely no suggestion that the views of UCS, NEA, or anyone else be promulgated. Indeed, we would hope that representatives of local defense industries would help students understand that maintenance of the nation's defense is critically important to their future.

HOWARD RIS
Executive Director
Union of Concerned Scientists
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As the nation's prime exponent of nuclear-age education, Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) recognizes its obligation to teach students to adopt a balanced and rational attitude toward discussion of controversial issues. André Ryerson's article . . . is a near perfect counter-example of the way ESR teaching materials encourage students to think. Mr. Ryerson's piece is permeated with the wholesale use of selective omission, passages out of context, misleading assertions, inaccuracies, and dubious assumptions. As a result, he distorts the teaching materials, purposes, and methods of Educators for Social Responsibility.

In enumerating ESR's suggested resources Mr. Ryerson cites only those that present the Soviet point of view. He fails to mention the many references that present a critical view of the Soviet Union, such as the American Security Council film, *Countdown for America*, and the Weinberger/Pentagon document, *Soviet Military Power*. Further, Mr. Ryerson contends that our lessons imply that all Western fears of the Soviet Union are unreasonable, only a matter of misperception and misinformation. ESR's curriculum *Perspectives* actually teaches the skills for differentiating between fantasy and reality:

> These activities give [the teacher] a chance to talk about the differences between fears based on stereotypes and misinformation versus fears based on knowledge and reliable information.

Granted, one of the lessons in *Perspectives* centers on President Reagan's speech to the National Association of Evangelicals. Mr. Ryerson asserts that the lesson is superficial and full of rigged, ironic questions. Actually, we print the President's entire speech and encourage the teacher to ask twenty-two straightforward and detailed questions about it:

> What is our real crisis, according to the President? How can we most effectively rise to the challenge of Communism? What is the President's goal with regard to nuclear weapons? What does he propose is the best way to get to this goal?

In this same section Mr. Ryerson also implies that alongside Reagan we place only the pacifistic figures of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Albert Einstein. He neglects our inclusion of General Omar Bradley and the Republican party platform. Each of his other examples represents a similar distortion that a close reading of our resources would show to be false. . . .

What appears to underlie Mr. Ryerson's misrepresentation of ESR's work is a notion of the Soviet threat that is so exaggerated it will not stand up to academic scrutiny. Two erroneous premises are apparent. The first is that the American commitment to democracy will be eroded by increased understanding of how the Soviets view the world and of the imperatives that shape their behavior. The second is that efforts to understand, cooperate, or communicate with the Soviets will lead to weakness at the bargaining table, doom for Soviet Jewry, and ultimately to another Munich.

These suppositions obscure the genuine American self-interests served by increasing our comprehension of the workings of Soviet society. ESR's project to learn and teach about the Soviet Union is based upon enlightened American self-interest, as well as realistic acceptance of the existence of the Soviet system. The nuclear dilemma will never be resolved without Soviet involvement. In a world bristling with nuclear weapons we are compelled to seek agreements with the Soviets, and therefore we are also compelled to become effectively educated about them. Yet recent polls illustrate the dangerous national ignorance about our chief adversary.

Such educational efforts do not assume that understanding alone will prevent confrontation. Emphasis on education about the Soviet Union does not negate the real diversity of Soviet and American interests and priorities. Education for understanding does not disregard the formidable Soviet military presence or blind one to the Soviets' desire for influence. Finally, it does not imply forgiveness of the Soviets' abuses of free expression and self-determination.

ESR is at the forefront of developing the methods to educate for the complexities of the nuclear age. The teaching materials in our 1986-87 program, "Thinking About the U.S. and the USSR," will examine the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, from the alphabet to education to freedom of expression; the history of, and turning points in, U.S.-Soviet relations; and the complexities of the land, its peoples, and its culture. We will also sponsor community forums for adults to discuss the challenges of educating about the Soviet Union.

We invite readers to review our materials to learn firsthand how we present balance and to participate in ESR programs in their own communities. We believe this kind of involvement is essential to an informed democracy.

SUSAN ALEXANDER
Acting Director
Educators for Social Responsibility
Cambridge, Massachusetts

ANDRÉ RYERSON writes:

Howard Ris shows that when all else fails, hand-wringing over credentials is the last refuge of weak argument. Mr. Ris says I have "no training or experience" in the education of junior-high students, and my "lack of pedagogical expertise" is obvious in my critique of *Choices*. It would seem, by this logic, that only junior-high teachers may criticize junior-high texts, only doctors may challenge doctors, and Congressmen shall soon be immune from criticism except by fellow Congressmen. Democracy will end the day we entertain with straight faces such guild-like notions of public discourse. (I state with reluctance, regarding my alleged "lack of pedagogical experience," that I hold a doctorate from Yale and taught undergraduates at Yale and Amherst for nine years, matters of no relevance, of course, to assessing the political biases of "peace-education" manuals.)

Mr. Ris says the pilot-testing of *Choices* in thirty-four states by the

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Union of Concerned Scientists showed that students approved, despite the stress, the discovery "that there are alternatives to preventing the horrible outcome of a nuclear war." This seems confirmed by other evidence of "nuclear-age" education, its advocates revealing teen-agers in filmed interviews transformed into fervent "peace activists" after the appropriate course of study. More concretely, students so influenced petitioned the selectmen of Darien, Connecticut, to jettison their civil-defense and federal-emergency-relocation plans. In Carlyle, Massachusetts, a youth commented, "The thought of nuclear war terrifies me, but after the debate we had I saw that there were enough people who wanted to help and get involved to stop this nuclear madness." Yet the results are not always so positive: "I am very pessimistic about the world," the New York *Times* reported a local high schooler saying after a nuclear-age course. "I feel it's real possible we will have a war and most of the human race will be exterminated." A father in Janesville, Wisconsin, told the *Wall Street Journal* that after a nuclear-war course his seventh-grade daughter suffered sleepless nights, "fretting that someone might push the wrong button and it would all be over." Despite his efforts through long talks to explain why we need nuclear weapons as a deterrent, "she felt if we destroyed all the nuclear weapons in the world, we would be safe." On the influence of such courses, therefore, Mr. Ris and I are not too far apart. It is simply that he approves of the effects, whereas I do not.

Mr. Ris denies that UCS manipulated defense-budget figures in *Choices,* when it allotted tokens in a game to equal 45 percent of the projected 1987 federal budget (using White House OMB projections back in 1983 for 1987—highly optimistic, from a defense standpoint). Even putting aside the fact that such White House figures are little more than initial bargaining positions, soon slashed by Congress, the OMB document in question projects $364.2 billion for defense, out of a projected budget of $978.9 billion. Simple arithmetic shows that the first figure is 37.2 percent of the second, *not* 45 percent. (Actual defense budgets, as I originally stated, have run from 26 to 29 percent of the total.) It is with some relief that one recalls that the Union of Concerned Scientists disdains to work on nuclear weapons. One would not feel at ease with safety mechanisms on nuclear weapons designed by scientists who cannot tell the difference between 37.2 and 45.

Finally, regarding the claim by the executive director of UCS that my analysis of *Choices* was a "hatchet job," it is worth mentioning the judgment of the Washington *Post* (not known for its hostility to groups like UCS), which editorialized in 1983 about *Choices*: "This is not teaching in any normally accepted—or for that matter acceptable—sense." More: "This is not education; this is political indoctrination." The phrase exactly sums up what I documented.

Susan Alexander of Educators for Social Responsibility reproves me for (among other things) "inaccuracies," yet seems unable to quote any particular instance. She says that what underlies my "misrepresentation of ESR's work is a notion of the Soviet threat that is so exaggerated it will not stand up to academic scrutiny." The assertion is incredible, since the absence of anything remotely resembling "academic scrutiny" of the Soviet threat is precisely one of my central complaints about ESR's texts, manuals for indoctrinating schoolchildren as of kindergarten in the sins of America and its capitalist economy, next to which *Choices* appears restrained. And far from my fearing the study of "how the Soviets view the world and of the imperatives that shape their behavior," that is just what one would hope the Educators for Social Responsibility might envisage doing. I will happily furnish ESR a bibliography on what Soviet leaders since Lenin have been saying, and what Soviet armies since 1917 have been doing, if that will initiate this ambitious project. Of course they are not the sort of things Soviet representatives say on American television, or at the United Nations, or publish in *New Times* to reassure Westerners, forms of discourse generally known as "propaganda," which ESR unfortunately sees fit

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to introduce to American classrooms as revealing the true aims of Marxism-Leninism.

Miss Alexander urges us to move toward a "realistic acceptance of the Soviet system," despite "the real diversity of Soviet and American interests and priorities," a charming way of urging us to commit suicide, since Leninism defines the Soviet state as the revolutionary instrument for ridding the world of bourgeois democracies. Soviet aims and American aims are not smoothed together by the word "diversity." The purposes of the U.S. and the Soviet Union are not "diverse"; they are opposed. We want bourgeois democracy to survive; they want it extinguished. The same unreality of language occurs in Miss Alexander's reference to Soviet military might as part of "the Soviets' desire for influence." The Soviet army did not send envoys south to indicate "the Soviets' desire for influence"; it invaded Afghanistan. Now in its seventh year, this brutal war passes miraculously without a paragraph in the "peace" manuals of ESR (as do all other acts of Soviet aggression), whereas the memory of America's role in Vietnam receives morbid and one-sided criticism, as does—more incredibly—our role in World War II.

By claiming their teaching manuals are politically "balanced" and "straightforward" (a conclusion I defy any sensible person to reach), Mr. Ris and Miss Alexander conveniently slip away from the main point of the article, which was not to debate the pros and cons of nuclear pacifism, nor to question the right of the blame-America-first lobby to express itself; the point, rather, was to challenge the presumption of such a lobby to commence indoctrinating our children in publicly-funded schools. I submit it is contrary to every public-policy principle on which this country was founded, beginning with our rights of conscience expressed in the First Amendment. The latter put an end to taxing people for the support of beliefs held by others. Said Thomas Jefferson: "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical." Yet that is what occurs when public schools teach the "peace" version of tug-of-war and arm-wrestling, in which the children are encouraged to cease competing and to surrender to their opponent. If private Quaker schools wish to teach their children such nonsense, they are entitled to do so. They are not entitled to foist it upon others at public expense.

The people's recourse to legal measures, in the end, if needed, would be justified to halt so clear a violation of a public trust.

The New Feminism

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Feminism, Stage Three" [August], Michael Levin maintains that I support only "parental leave and day care." His own view of the matter is this: "One would think that the goal of anyone who takes seriously the problems of the mother who must work would be to make her working unnecessary, and one way to help do so would be to increase the dependent deduction for minors on the federal income tax."

The fact of the matter is that I support parental leave and day care, as Mr. Levin says. But I also support some form of high cash payment, just as he does, if not necessarily for the same reasons. In fact, I wrote a column about it, "Help Families, Not Yuppies."

Ben Wattenberg
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor of Commentary:

Michael Levin dismisses all the recent commotion about "family policy" with a simple prescription: mothers should stay out of the labor force and tend to their children.

Listen, you 70 percent of all mothers with school-age children who work outside the home as well as in it—your problem has been solved. Quit work, stay at home. Get serious, Mr. Levin. The fact is there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that the entry of women into the labor force is temporary or reversible. Women are joining the labor force across the globe for a variety of reasons—for example, greater education—which have little to do with Mr. Levin's morality tale of family-hating feminists. A policy prescription which assumes the reversal of this trend is simply not relevant to today's realities, or tomorrow's.

Mr. Levin is also quite careless with his facts. For example, he declares that family-policy advocates have "passed over in silence" the idea of raising the child exemption in the federal tax code. Perhaps Mr. Levin is not familiar with the often-cited proposals on this topic from family-policy advocates like Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Children's Defense Fund, or even my own organization. Similarly, Mr. Levin's notion that real wages and family income are of no interest to family-policy supporters will come as quite a shock to nearly everyone I know in the field. Mr. Levin proposes "a rise in real wages" as part of his pro-family program—does he really think that anyone finds this idea too hot to handle?

By erecting such straw men, Mr. Levin seeks to hold family-policy advocates responsible for women's entering the labor force. In fact, the opposite is true: it is because women are working that new policies are being proposed to help today's parents bridge the gap between work and family.

The stage is now set for an important national debate on the family. Some voices, including Mr. Levin's, will insist that the only way forward is to repeal the last thirty years of new opportunities for women. Surely there are better ideas around than that one.

David Blankenhorn
Co-Director, Institute for American Values
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Feminism, Stage Three," Michael Levin correctly perceives that Western society has put too little emphasis (in the form of praise) on full-time motherhood. However, he is the first to put it down, as he tosses off motherhood as something "which virtually all women can succeed at." Similarly, he takes for granted the traditional male role of breadwinner. . . . Mr. Levin seems to think that all women are genetically programmed to be Mother of the Year and all men are genetically programmed to be Lee Iacocca. More's the pity, since it is evident that most are not.

In addition, it is not true that "it has yet to be grasped that [maternal] impulses weaken the drive for extra-familial achievement." Women across the nation are grasping all too well the family-career dilemma, whereby society will penalize them economically for accepting the responsibilities and joys of motherhood, and emotionally for accepting the rewards

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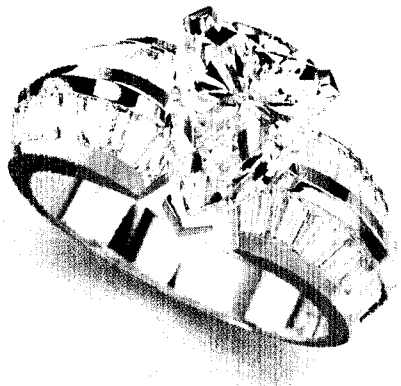

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of a career at the expense of time with the family. One might as well say that the innate drive in men to earn big bucks weakens their drive for familial achievement, a position which could easily be substantiated by statistics on runaway fathers. But in this age, debating our presumed biological imperatives does not help; we are not bound by them as other animals seem to be.

What has yet to be grasped is that there is no reason, genetic or societal, to divide the world so sharply into breadwinners and breeders. This arrangement has obviously proved uncomfortable or untenable for both genders, and has been attacked, subverted, and put aside for decades. What is needed is an arrangement which will allow each role to be respected within each person, man or woman. . . .

JENNY-ANNE MARTZ
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Levin has written a factual and well-reasoned analysis of the current status of women and the feminist movement. His observations on the effects of increasing divorce and abandonment on a large proportion of the nation's women, pushing them below the poverty level while forcing them into the marketplace and into inadequate child-care arrangements, are, if anything, understated. However, upon finishing the article I was dismayed. Mr. Levin does what the extremists of the women's-liberation movement also do—he looks at women as an undifferentiated mass with uniform needs, aptitudes, and aspirations.

The finest achievement of the women's-liberation movement has been to win wide public acceptance for women's right to a multiplicity of choices. . . . Different women will make different choices reflecting their varying interests and capacities. All of this Mr. Levin ignores, treating women as if all were alike, with identical drives, emotional patterns, and reactions to motherhood and family.

Mr. Levin states that families supported solely by the husband's wage experience far lower rates of divorce, poverty, "and other forms of social pathology. In short, women do best when they raise children with a hard-working man." All women? Counselors at battered-women's shelters know better. They know that the greatest obstacle to helping a battered woman is the woman's fear of being unable to support herself and her children without the battering husband. . . .

Later, Mr. Levin uses an interesting statistic in an interesting way. He says that 56 percent of all women who work do so for the money. If so, it follows that 44 percent work for some reason other than money. . . . Why are these 44 percent in the working world? For the feeling that they are using their talents, for the challenge of daily events in the marketplace, for a meaning they are not finding at home.

In speaking of motherhood, Mr. Levin opines: A mother "will normally wish to spend at least three years with her child before sending him off somewhere." The fatal word is "normally." If a woman wants to go back to work long before then and finds adequate—to her—child-care arrangements, . . . is she then abnormal? Women, portrayed by Mr. Levin as having strong needs to be with their children, are the greatest child abusers. Fewer men abuse children. Why? Because they are not home with them all day when loving maternal impulses can fade very rapidly. . . .

The difficulty with Mr. Levin's article is the broad stereotyping of both men and women. Many women have strong maternal drives; others . . . have little or none. Some men have strong paternal drives which may lessen their interest in extra-familial achievement. Some women work well in the home and are happy there; they should be encouraged. Other women have different talents and interests and prefer working outside the home. They, too, should be encouraged. Some women do best under a system that permits them part of each arrangement, and they, too, have a place. Women and men are both exceedingly various and complex in their needs, dispositions, and talents. To stereotype either sex as having uniform needs, physical, emotional, or social, is to fall into the serious error that detracts from Mr. Levin's otherwise excellent article.

JANE ZAHN EDISES
Carefree, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

At last, an honest look at the issues involved in child-rearing when both parents work.

Mr. Levin says that "Almost nothing is heard about 'traditional' American women—still the majority, if barely—who raise children within a family supported by the husband's wage." Since I am one of these "traditional" American women, I would like to speak out. . . .

Mr. Levin makes a convincing argument that it should be the mother who stays at home, but on this one point I differ with him. I feel that men and women are equal, so that either one could provide children with good care. Of course this is a decision that each family must work out for itself. . . .

The current cost of living also has to be considered. I agree with Mr. Levin that the dependent deduction for minors on the federal income tax should be substantially increased. We should be moving in the direction of making it easier for one parent to stay home instead of getting both parents out of the home into paying jobs.

I am a member of the privileged "baby-boom" generation raised in the 1950's and 1960's. The vast majority of us benefited greatly from having a mother who cared for us full-time. It is unfortunate that more of us don't want to emulate our mothers and give the same care to our own children.

KAREN J. TIDHOLM
Houston, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Levin's article raises the interesting question, rarely addressed by feminists except to be shunted aside, of the innateness of sex differences and its ramifications. I confess ignorance as to the extent of the emotional differences between boys and girls—differences that exist prior to nurture and socialization. Further research needs to be done in this area, preferably research that is ideology-free. . . . Why, for instance, do girls in general seem to have more difficulty with mathematics than boys, and is this solely due to differences in socialization? Mr. Levin says that a woman's maternal impulses may impair her earning ability. I would add that perhaps a woman's ability to raise a child from infancy is innately greater than that of a man. I have noticed, for example, that mothers respond to their infant children with a perspicacity that a father can learn only with great difficulty. . . .

If it can be discovered, through

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more research, that there are innate differences between males and females, . . . then the joy, value, and validity of motherhood can be revived.

JOSEPH R. AZIZ
Flushing, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Two cheers for Michael Levin for pointing out that the Ruth Sidels and Sylvia Hewletts are not all that different in the short run from the card-carrying feminists they criticize. Essentially, these so-called more moderate writers agree with doctrinaire feminists on most issues and especially on the supreme importance of a woman's having a career or full-time job and not being a housewife and full-time mother. In fact, their books, which Mr. Levin notes are perceived as marking a "historic turn [for the women's movement] toward a new appreciation of motherhood and children," . . . are in some ways more pernicious than doctrinaire feminist tracts, for they argue for such policies as affirmative action, comparable worth, and national day care with practical and meliorist rather than utopian and ideological rhetoric. . . .

During the last decade and a half, women in the workforce have benefited from goverment-imposed favoritism. The number of women in male-dominated, high-paying, prestigious, and symbolically masculine professions has risen dramatically—roughly 25 million of over 35 million new jobs have gone to women—while in the same period the "feminization of poverty" has grown increasingly worse. This proves that the so-called "feminization of poverty"—a propagandistic and tendentious way of saying that most of the people defined as living below the poverty line are children in single-parent, female-headed families receiving welfare benefits—has little or nothing to do with "discrimination against women." This phenomenon is largely explained by divorce, desertion, and illegitimacy, and by a welfare system and culture which foster these maladies and subvert the male role as essential family provider; by the massive influx of middle- and upper-middle-class women into the workforce, . . . most of them with no true and urgent need to work . . . ; and by male poverty and joblessness, and the dwindling percentage of young males with jobs that pay adequately to support a family. . . .

Though they would deny it for purely tactical reasons, feminists covertly desire inflation; higher taxes for families with children; male poverty, joblessness, and unemployment; a society in which fewer and fewer males have jobs that pay adequately to support a family; and growing rates of divorce and male desertion. The reason is that such trends induce more and more women to enter the workforce, create a society in which women are less able and inclined to marry and have children, and force men to stay home and take care of the children . . . while their wives and girlfriends work. . . .

SCOTT KUELL
Green Bay, Wisconsin

MICHAEL LEVIN writes:

I regret not having mentioned Ben Wattenberg's and David Blankenhorn's support for increased dependent deductions, but I would still be careful about endorsing many of the policies that parade under that flag. The deduction can too easily be turned into a tax credit or a "negative income tax," both of which are schemes to get the middle class—usually understood to include families now managing to scrape by on one income—to pay more of a tax bill that is already grossly inflated by unnecessary government expenditures.

Incidentally, Mr. Wattenberg's support for "parental" (as opposed to maternal) leave indirectly reveals the extent to which unisex ideology has permeated our society. Even those who imagine themselves pro-natalist cannot bring themselves to do any favors for women that would imply their special place in child-rearing. Fathers and mothers must be treated as fungible.

It is not I who said that mothers should stay at home when their children are home; child psychologists say it. As far as public policy is concerned, however, my own view is that the whole matter should be left to the individual, with the

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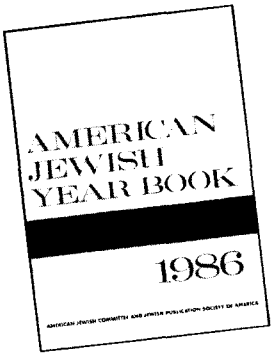

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government taking sides neither with the mother who decides to stay home nor with the mother who decides to work. A policy, such as Mr. Blankenhorn supports, of making the lot of women who choose to work easier is not simply a response to "today's realities"; it is a policy that induces more women to work.

I agree with Mr. Blankenhorn that education and other changes in modern life are responsible for the entry of women into the workforce. This situation is reversible in the sense that it lowers the birth rate and a sufficiently low birth rate means the end of modern society. I would not presume to criticize this eventuality, but it does show how harshly nature deals with infertility.

This brings me to the letters which raise, in one way or another, the issue of whether the entry of women into the workforce may be said to "go against natural impulses." I would point out, first of all, that to say a woman's natural impulses "impair" her earning ability does not mean opposing a woman to her impulses, as if they were external forces that get in her way. It is to say that she will typically not want to make the sacrifices necessary for this extra income; if she does, in many cases she will find herself with both an unsatisfactory professional life and a disastrous personal life.

I do not think that merely emphasizing the biological link between mothers and babies will be at all sufficient for a recrudescence of respect for motherhood; that will require that the thousands of formal and informal propaganda organs of Western society stop praising wholly atypical women (the female judges and other authority figures who seem to populate every TV police show, for instance) and stop implying that there is something wrong with a woman who "just" wants children.

I am sorry that Jenny-Anne Martz took me to be slighting motherhood by trivializing it. I meant, simply, that since motherhood is intrinsically fulfilling for women, it is a great pity that society has decided to undervalue this ready-made path to happiness.

I would also be less sanguine than Miss Martz is about our entanglement with biological passions. We evolved our present drives under circumstances in which a female preoccupation with children was adaptive—it used to take about a lifetime of preoccupation to rear a couple of offspring to maturity. Nowadays women do not have to be so preoccupied, and people seem naturally to assume that because they need not be, they do not want to be. Women themselves may assume this. Nonetheless, as I wrote, our genes have not heard that they have become maladaptive, and until they do we shall have to put up with their imperatives.

I should emphasize, in reply to Jane Zahn Edises, that all my remarks were meant to cover the great generality of men and women, not each and every one. I do not think the exceptions are "abnormal" in any moral sense, but rather that they will forever be defying universal expectations created by the great mass of the more typical. Incidentally, I noted that 44 percent of *all* women who work do so for reasons other than money; presumably the proportion is much smaller for *mothers* who work. Donna Shalala gives a figure of 20 percent, which I will stipulate as accurate.

I was troubled by Mr. Blankenhorn's reflexive endorsement of the "new opportunities" that have emerged for women, and Scott Kuell's letter articulates the trouble. The new opportunities have been created as a result of government-enforced policies making it harder for men to get decent jobs and symbolically emasculating them by denying them spheres which they can regard as manly. As George Gilder and others have tried patiently to explain, men deprived of pride in constructive activities will find a niche in destructive activities. It is astounding, furthermore, that the most productive society in human history should suddenly decide to make it increasingly difficult for its most productive members to get jobs, and set about replacing them with workers whose productivity, for reasons having nothing to do with ability *per se*, is at best about two-thirds of theirs.

A Hostage's Release

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Syria: The Cuba of the Middle East?" [July], Daniel Pipes cites my experience as an American hostage. He claims, first, that I "was abducted with Syrian complicity, for how else could [I] have been taken from Beirut to Iran?" And, second, he implies that Syria arranged my release to prevent an American-Syrian confrontation "just when Washington was most angry about Syrian rejection of the U.S.-arranged accord between Israel and Lebanon."

In fact, I have reason to believe that Syria was not involved in my abduction. As for my release, although the Syrian government obviously expected recognition for its role, the process which led to this successful end was sufficiently lengthy and complicated to make me seriously doubt that it was timed with a specific U.S.-Syrian imbroglio in view. Unless Daniel Pipes has access to evidence unavailable to me, his statements about my case are purely speculative and hence questionable.

David S. Dodge

Princeton, New Jersey

Daniel Pipes writes:

While I respect David S. Dodge's views, both because he is a fine scholar of the Middle East and because he is the person directly involved, I must differ with his assessment of his own case.

The reasons to believe that the Syrian government had a hand in his abduction are compelling: not only do Syrian forces control nearly all of Lebanon, but to pass from Lebanon to Iran Mr. Dodge had to go through Syria. Mr. Dodge's protest that he "has reason" to believe that Syria was not involved may be sufficient for him, but is not evidence for the rest of us.

On the issue of Damascus's intent in releasing Mr. Dodge, "lengthy and complicated" negotiations do not preclude a political purpose to the timing of his release. Quite the contrary: the more involved the talks, the more the hostage-holders can manipulate the resolution. This was dramatically illustrated when the Iranian government released the U.S. embassy hostages just as President Reagan was being sworn into office. No one can argue that the timing of their release was coincidence, though the negotiations in this case were yet lengthier and much more complex than those for Mr. Dodge.

Yalta

To the Editor of Commentary:

I was most interested in Paul Seabury's "Yalta and the Neoconservatives" [August]. . . .

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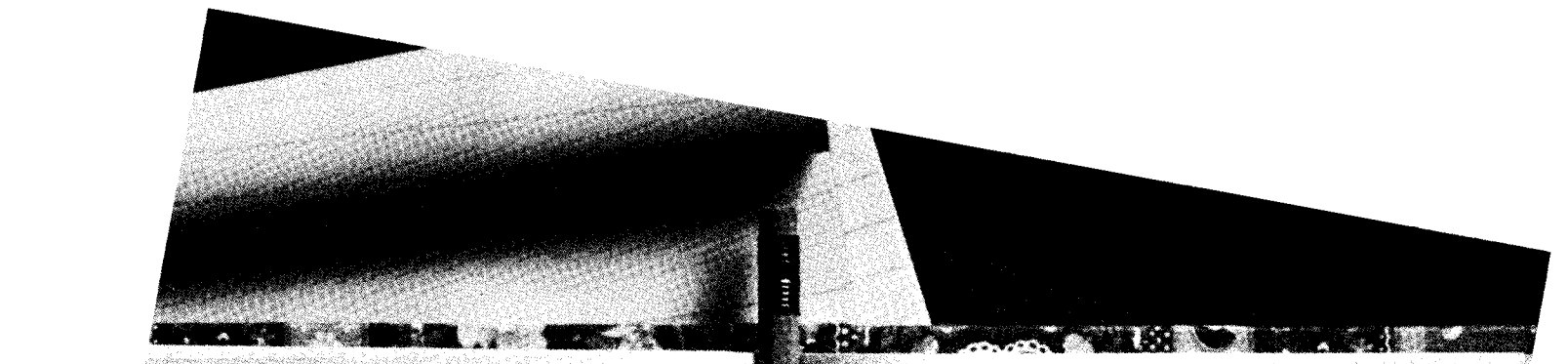

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"Rtudl soe uedye weiu."

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"Ysud ud susus."

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Our goal with Operation Rescue: to cut the dropout rate in half by 1990, a significant step to stem the tide of illiteracy.

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National Education Association

THE SUBJECT IS EXCELLENCE

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I cannot accept the argument put forth by Theodore Draper that the Soviet occupation of Poland was a *fait accompli* before Yalta. Until 1944 I lived in Poland within the borders later covered by the Yalta agreement. My property was initially confiscated by the Soviets in 1939; subsequently, after the German invasion, I hid among Poles to escape the Nazis. This may be a worm's-eye view, but I recorded the following incident in the diary I kept throughout this period; it indicates that the Soviets were not at all sure they would prevail and dominate Poland.

The incident took place in a factory that had been nationalized by the Soviets in 1939. I wrote in early 1941:

> The head bookkeeper of the trust summoned me and ordered me to revise all the inventories taken during the nationalization which had been based on prewar prices, with the zloty on a par with the ruble. The total figure amounted to over two million rubles, but the bookkeeper made us reduce this sum to five hundred thousand. I am at a loss to understand what this means. Perhaps the Russians expect to have to compensate us for the confiscated properties in some distant future.

The Soviets, it appeared, were afraid that if the Western powers won the war, they would not countenance the deal the Soviets had made with the Nazis in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which had been strongly denounced in the West. The Soviets were evidently preparing to compromise with Allied disapproval.

Soon after, in June 1941, the Germans invaded Russia and the views of Churchill and Roosevelt diverged. In 1941, we still believed that once America entered the war, Hitler would be defeated, and Poland would not only be restored to its prewar boundaries, but would be enlarged by the addition of eastern Pomerania and Silesia, territories to which it had a historic claim.

But the mood of the Poles changed when, after suffering reverses in the first two years of war, the Red Army pushed back the Germans and in the summer of 1944 once again occupied eastern Poland. The Red Army stopped almost exactly at the Curzon line, east of the Vistula, enabling the Germans to annihilate the underground Polish army then fighting in Warsaw. President Roosevelt, in spite of Churchill's entreaties, refused to give help to the Poles. Assistance to the Poles at that time might have helped establish a viable Polish armed force and might therefore have upset the Yalta agreement, which had been reached only a few months earlier.

Some time before that, on October 28, 1943, I noted in my diary:

> As we hear of Russian successes on the front our house becomes full of gloom. Our Polish hosts are showing great anguish, since the future of Poland is uppermost in their minds. I suspect that Poland is not the Allies' primary concern. We all fear that Poland's fate already has been sealed in Teheran. The Polish underground press is recording shrilly that the political situation looks very dark for the Poles. There is a great disillusionment with Churchill and Roosevelt, and Stalin is being attacked directly and viciously.

The premonition of the Poles proved to be tragically correct, although they did not give full credit to Churchill for his efforts on their behalf. At Yalta, the Curzon line was accepted by Roosevelt as the future border between Russia and Poland, although that was never its original intent.

The Curzon line was proposed by Lord Curzon, a former Viceroy of India who had been called back from retirement to serve as England's Foreign Secretary. His experience with European affairs was limited. The line, which included territories never before part of Russia, was to serve as an *armistice line* between the Russian and Polish armies, never as a *border*. This was understood by both sides. . . .

There is another strong indication that even after Yalta Stalin was not sure of the future of the disputed territories. In the fall of 1944, with the end of the war still not in sight, Stalin rushed to resettle Poles from eastern Poland in the then very narrow sliver of liberated Poland. For reasons still unclear, Jews, as well as many Ukrainians who had converted to Roman Catholicism and thus had "become Poles," were also encouraged to register for repatriation and were permitted to leave. Although trains were extremely scarce during the war, they were put in service for the registrants. We left the Ukraine on one such train and were struck by the absence of the usual thorough check by the secret police. It seemed to us at the time that there was an agenda to get the Poles out of that part of the territory as quickly as possible. . . .

Far from being a myth, Yalta has become a catastrophic reality, a colossal blunder, perhaps the worst in this century. The Yalta agreement is the hinge from which the iron curtain hangs. It was the precursor of the Berlin Wall and of the Brezhnev Doctrine. It has caused the enslavement not only of the Poles but also of the Czechs and Hungarians and all the other nationalities trapped behind impenetrable borders.

Is the fear of Soviet might a reason to defend Roosevelt? With this logic we had better prepare for future Yaltas in Central and South America, in Africa, in the Middle East, and everywhere Soviet interests and ours might collide.

SAMUEL L. TENNENBAUM
West Orange, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to amplify Paul Seabury's comments about President Roosevelt's appointment of Joseph Davies as U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Apart from his miserable pro-Soviet memoir, *Mission to Moscow*, and the even worse pro-Soviet Hollywood movie sausaged out of that memoir, Ambassador Davies was guilty of endorsing treason as well. On February 19, 1946, the New York *Times* published a story in which Ambassador Davies was quoted as saying that "Russia in self-defense has every moral right to seek atomic-bomb secrets through military espionage if excluded from such information by her former fighting allies." . . .

Mr. Seabury refers in his catalogue of pro-Soviet voices in the Roosevelt administration to the likes of Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White. I think we should also include Lauchlin Currie, a White House assistant and associate of White, who was identified by Elizabeth Bentley, a Soviet courier, and by Whittaker Chambers as part of a Soviet espionage group. Currie was a special adviser at the White House on Far Eastern affairs. Currie recommended Owen Lattimore as an adviser to Chiang Kai-shek when Chiang asked FDR to nominate an adviser. Currie, by

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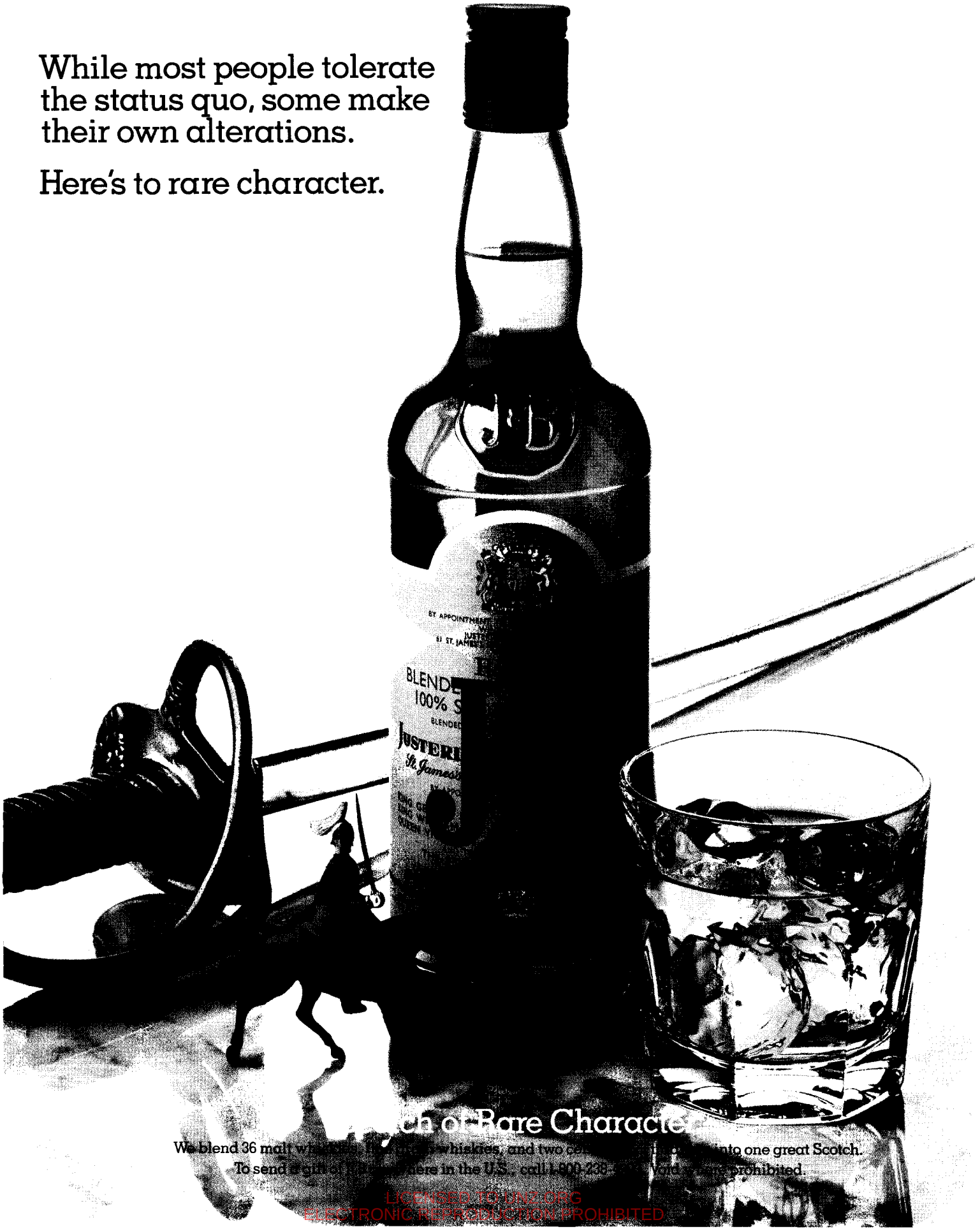
Here's to rare character.



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the way, was interviewed recently on the Voice of America from Colombia where he has lived for a great many years. The interviewer asked no questions about Currie's political past; it was just a friendly, let's-all-help-the-less-developed-countries kind of interview.

ARNOLD BEICHMAN
Hoover Institution
Stanford, California

The "Protocols"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I immensely enjoyed Dafna Allon's "Reflections on the Art of Lying" [June], but would like to make one correction. She states accurately that in August 1921, the London *Times* exploded the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion.* But she ignores that previously, in May 1920, the same *Times* had become the worldwide disseminator of the forgery (see on this point Norman Cohn's classic *Warrant for Genocide).* Why did the "Thunderer" take such a stand? In all probability, in order to discredit obliquely the Bolshevik rulers, describing them as a façade for the Jewish plot (see my *History of Anti-Semitism,* Vol. IV).

Why do most Jewish sources remain silent on this point, thus lying by omission? I would ascribe it to the awe which our forefathers felt for the formidable authority of the London *Times.* At the time, the chief rabbi of Great Britain, Dr. Hertz, protested respectfully in its columns: "I want therefore to appeal to you, as Editor-in-Chief of the most influential newspaper in the world. . . ." To no avail, of course, and thus it began; for a couple of years, the whole English-speaking world toyed with the idea of an international Jewish peril. The *Times*'s recantations of 1921, implicit as they were, cleared the atmosphere, but certain circles, notably those around Henry Ford in the U.S., went on.

LÉON POLIAKOV
Massy, France

DAFNA ALLON writes:

Let me thank Léon Poliakov for his letter and confess that I simply did not know that the London *Times* backed the *Protocols* forgery in 1920, though I called that the peak year. Mr. Poliakov is right in linking the ready acceptance of the *Protocols* with the belief that the Russian Revolution was no more and no less than a Jewish plot. This had long been an article of belief in Russia *before* the Revolution—a self-fulfilling prophecy of a sort. According to Russian police statistics, nearly 30 percent of those arrested for political subversion at the time of the abortive 1904 revolution were Jews. The year 1903 was the year of the Kishinev pogrom, and by definition a pogrom in Russia was permitted and abetted if not provoked by the police. The year 1904 saw the publication in St. Petersburg of the police-inspired fabrication, "The Plan for the Conquest of the World by the Jews." The web of spreading connections from then on is still of interest.

In 1914 Arthur James Balfour, who as British Foreign Secretary was to issue the Balfour Declaration in 1917, confessed to Chaim Weizmann that he had absorbed a dose of anti-Semitism from Cosima Wagner in Bayreuth in 1912. On December 10, 1914, with remarkable prescience, Weizmann told Herbert Samuel (then a junior member of the Asquith cabinet) of his foreboding that in fighting a war with the Russians as allies, the English might be infected by Russian anti-Semitism.

Weizmann recalled (in *Trial and Error*) that on a visit to General Allenby's headquarters in southern Palestine in 1919 he was shown typescript copies of a mysterious anti-Jewish mishmash circulating among British officers, extracts from something called the *Protocols.* General Wyndham Deedes told Weizmann, "You will find it in the haversack of a great many British officers here [in Palestine, in 1919] and they believe it! It was brought over by the British Military Mission which has been serving in the Caucasus on the staff of the Grand Duke Nicholas."

In 1920, then, the London *Times* was not so much a source as a comforting confirmation. All the years between have been of little avail. Even if the *Protocols* is no longer handed out to visitors to Arab countries like a bazaar merchant's card, the malignant thing is still referred to as if it were a consecrated classic. And its message goes marching on: Jewish-capitalist-Communist-imperialist-Zionist-world-conspiracy.

May I encroach still more on your space to tell your readers that only now, after the publication of my article, have I learned from Yuri Stern of the Soviet Jewry Information Center in Jerusalem that the issue of the *Star of the Orient* which contained the Babel story I discussed in my article was a special number, published to raise funds for the victims of the 1967 Tashkent earthquake? It also printed other previously unpublished works by other previously banned (and mostly dead) writers, in Russian, including Osip Mandelstam, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Andrei Voznesensky. A second issue was put together with more of such works—but it was never published. Moscow caught up, apparently. So Babel's story just got through by a nose!

Ortega y Gasset

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was most heartily pleased with Richard John Neuhaus's informed consideration of Ortega y Gasset ["Ortega y Gasset Revisited," July]. His references to Julien Benda's *The Treason of the Intellectuals* are very discerning. I, we, are in Mr. Neuhaus's intellectual debt. Mass man and mass cant are on the loose here in Nicaragua. . . .

[SIGNATURE WITHHELD]
Managua, Nicaragua

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Ortega y Gasset Revisited," Richard John Neuhaus writes that "Mass man is not the proletariat but the people of all classes, especially the ruling classes. . . ." This is an important point. A primary criticism of *The Revolt of the Masses* has always been that Ortega despised democracy and the "common man" and was a champion of aristocracy. In fact, Ortega viewed the aristocrat as the progenitor of "mass man." Ortega wrote that "his [the aristocrat's] characteristic traits, in all times and among all peoples, germinate in the mass man." Prominent among these traits are the aristocrat's "propensity to make out of games and sports the central occupation of his life; the cult of the body—hygienic regime and attention to dress; lack of romance in his dealings with women; his amusing himself with the 'intellectual,' while at bottom despising him. . . ."

Ortega thought true nobility a far more prevalent trait in the "common man" than among elites: "[I]t is not rare to find today among workingmen . . . nobly disci-

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plined minds." However, he found "nobly disciplined minds" exceedingly rare among social elites and in intellectual life. He saw social elites dominated by "the mass and the vulgar," and "in the intellectual life . . . one can note the progressive triumph of the pseudo-intellectual, unqualified, unqualifiable, and, by [his] very mental texture, disqualified."

The Revolt of the Masses was published over a half-century ago, and if intellectual life was replete with the "pseudo-intellectual" in 1930, one can scarcely imagine what Ortega would have written had he lived to see the 1960's and all that decade has left in its wake.

JAMES E. SALYERS
Ashmore, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It is with particular pleasure that I commend Richard John Neuhaus for his insightful discussion of the new translation of *The Revolt of the Masses by* Ortega y Gasset. It can serve as a paragon of the reviewing art.

RICHARD HUETT
Tarrytown, New York

Ayn Rand

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Terry Teachout's review of Barbara Branden's *The Passion of Ayn Rand* [Books in Review, July] is a serious lapse in COMMENTARY's usually high standard. Instead of discussing the biography, he uses the format to launch an undisciplined attack on the subject of the biography, Ayn Rand. . . .

Mr. Teachout goes to elastic lengths to portray Ayn Rand as a kind of literary eccentric who somehow achieved success, then as a renegade conservative who was rejected by the conservative movement, and finally as a tragic figure of no great literary import who deserves more our pity than our admiration. Thus Mr. Teachout adheres to a curious tradition in conservative and liberal critical circles when the subject is Ayn Rand—that of dropping whatever pretenses to objectivity and discrimination one may lay claim to and pouring on the vitriol. In this respect, Mr. Teachout's pseudo-review complements the biography itself, which . . . performs the same task of diminishing the scope of Ayn Rand's intellect and efforts by diminishing her person and character. . . .

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Mr. Teachout resorts to the time-honored ritual of ad hominems, slyly integrated into his recapitulation of Ayn Rand's career. Like Granville Hicks, Diana Trilling, and William F. Buckley, Jr., he prefers the cheap shot over any attempt at reasoned rebuttal, and hopes his readers regard his product as a benchmark in intellectual sophistication.

However, for all that is wrong with Mr. Teachout's review, I must credit him with a modicum of honesty. After a patronizing appraisal of Ayn Rand's vision, . . . he writes: "To take such an idealistic vision seriously is necessarily to part company with conservatism as it has been construed from Burke onward." In this he is right. One cannot borrow from Ayn Rand's corpus of thought without eventually adopting the whole of it; unlike conservatism and liberalism, it is an integrated philosophy. It is this unyielding integrity of her thought and vision which both conservatives and liberals fear the most, which they cannot refute on open ground, and which leads them to choose a Bronx cheer over serious reflection.

EDWARD CLINE
Palo Alto, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Terry Teachout's general evaluation of Objectivism is indicated by his inability to understand how anyone over the age of sixteen can take it seriously. But this evaluation is clearly the result of Mr. Teachout's own philosophical premises. Anyone who accepts the conservative philosophy of original sin, human depravity, determinism, and the impotence of reason will naturally find Ayn Rand's philosophy "unrealistic." Objectivism is not unrealistic; it merely rejects the conservative's notion of what is real—including what Mr. Teachout calls conservatism's "tragic philosophy of compromise."

Mr. Teachout seems to have little awareness of Objectivist philosophical writings. He gives the impression that most of Ayn Rand's post-*Atlas Shrugged* career was devoted to getting the novel made into a movie. In fact, little time was so spent. On the contrary, she spent those twenty-five years primarily on philosophy, in particular on the essays which filled her periodicals and the seven books on her philosophy and its applications. Noteworthy technical works on Objectivism include Rand's *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* (a new theory of concepts) and Leonard Peikoff's *The Ominous Parallels* (the Objectivist philosophy of history, as shown by an analysis of the philosophical roots of Nazi Germany). A just-published work based on Objectivist epistemology is David Kelley's *The Evidence of the Senses*.

Mr. Teachout's premises also explain other errors he makes in characterizing Objectivism. He terms Objectivism "hedonistic," apparently because it advocates happiness on earth. And, he claims, Objectivism views philosophy as a utilitarian means to a short-term end, apparently because it holds that philosophy is a necessity for living, not an intellectual game or escape into a "higher realm" of ideas. In fact, Mr. Teachout's claims are incorrect on all these counts (and many others). I refer the reader to Ayn Rand's *The Virtue of Selfishness* and *Philosophy: Who Needs It?* for Objectivism's actual positions on these issues.

Mr. Teachout is correct in one important respect: Ayn Rand's ideas "will be with us for some time to come." And, given his own philosophy, he is also right to be discomfited.

EDWIN A. LOCKE
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Terry Teachout's nasty hatchet job on Barbara Branden's splendid biography is directed primarily not at Mrs. Branden but at Ayn Rand. . . . Mr. Teachout's review . . . does not stand in isolation but is representative of the shabby treatment conservatives have given Rand and her ideas. . . .

What are the essentials of Ayn Rand's philosophy? . . . Ayn Rand understood that ideas are not like strawberries one can pick and choose as one pleases. She recognized that it was not enough to combat the horrors of collectivism by implicitly embracing one of its variants. For her, conservatism, socialism, liberalism, fascism, and Communism all share the same fatal premise: they find some end higher than the individual to which he must submit and sacrifice himself. Consequently, at the base of Ayn Rand's ethical system rests egoism, the belief that each individual's primary purpose is the achievement of his own honest happiness. . . .

As Ayn Rand was forever pointing out, every achievement, every inch of progress, every step from the cave that man has made has been a result of reason. Thus, anything that is anti-reason is, for her, anti-life; hence her uncompromising hostility toward faith and religion. But to exercise his reason, man must be free to think and free to act upon his judgment; hence Ayn Rand's support of laissez-faire capitalism as the only political-economic system compatible with man's nature. . . .

The point here is not that one must agree with Ayn Rand, but that her positions are rationally defensible and deserve a better hearing than they have received from intellectuals up to this day—especially from conservative intellectuals who have the most to gain from her philosophy in their defense of freedom and individual rights. . . .

CARL HARVEY
Milton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It is clear that Terry Teachout does not like the stylized romanticism of Ayn Rand's fiction, but he does not seem to be aware of any of her nonfiction. . . . Ayn Rand is not just a novelist whose works contain a few philosophical passages; she elaborated a distinctive and complex philosophical system in her later works. . . .

In ethics, Ayn Rand rejects two predominant historical alternatives, traditional egoism and altruism. According to her, man should pursue his own happiness without giving up his needs and interests for other men (or society, or God). This differs from Nietszchean egoism in two ways—first, happiness is not short-run hedonism or a life spent following random impulses. It means using one's ability to think . . . in order to discover and understand what one's needs and specific values are in work, love, and other areas. . . . Secondly, animals can find fulfillment as predators or parasites but human beings cannot. . . .

Altruism says: sacrifice your own interests to others; you are not an end in yourself. Nietszchean egoism says: do whatever you feel like and trample anyone who gets in the way. "Rational egoism" says: do not be either sacrifice or sacrificer. . . .

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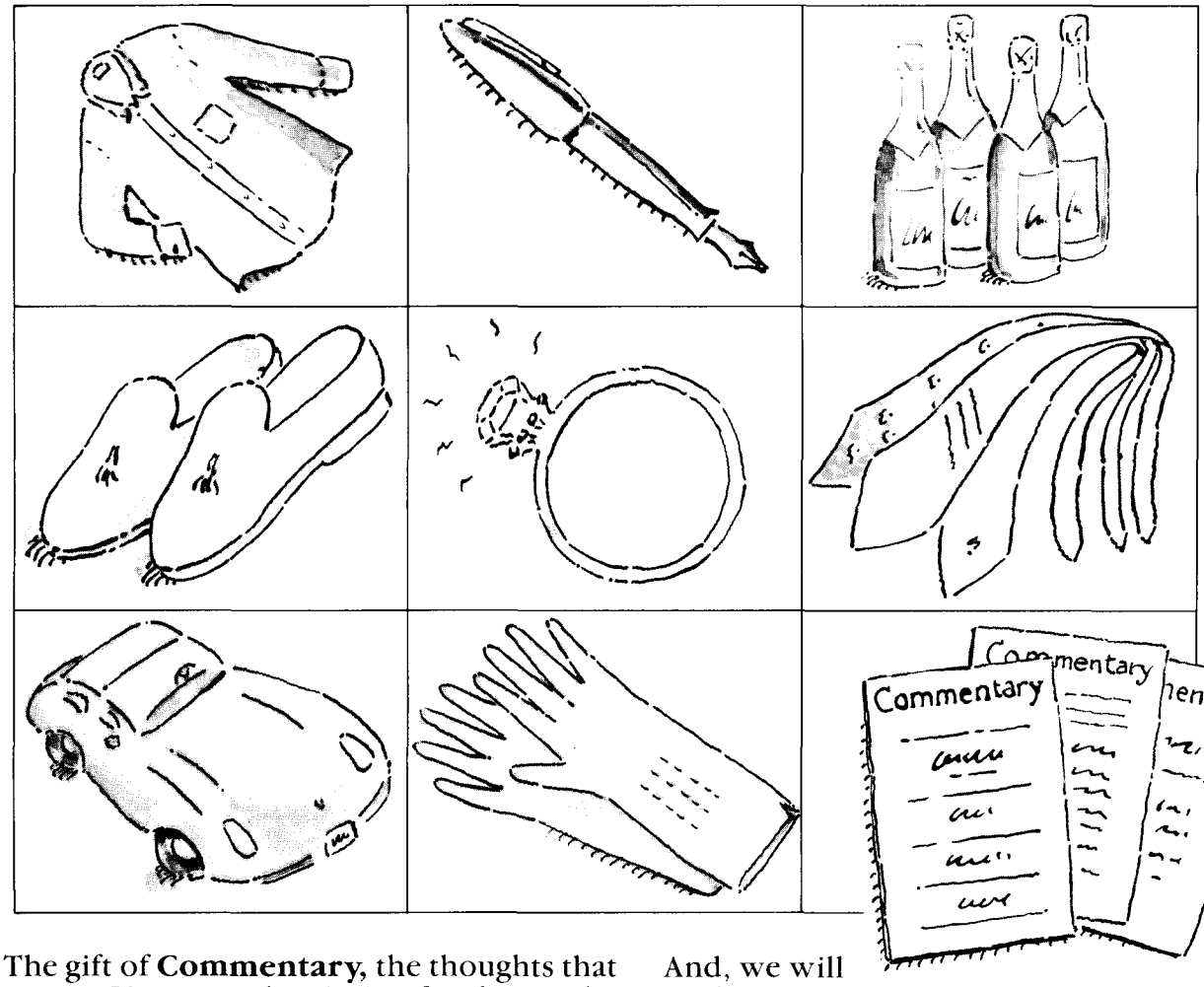

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Ayn Rand is a serious philosopher who is only beginning to get the respect she deserves. . . .

PHILIP COATES
Los Angeles, California

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I have always been at something of a loss with people of obvious intelligence who insist on taking Ayn Rand seriously. The only possible answer to the absurd claim that the author of *Atlas Shrugged* was a great novelist, for example, is: read Proust, read Henry James. And a similarly despairing answer must go to Messrs. Cline, Locke, Harvey, and Coates, who regret the absence from my review of a "reasoned rebuttal" of a philosophy too crude to refute, too unsophisticated to analyze. Indeed, I am increasingly convinced that Objectivism is the *pons asinorum* of the American Right. "One cannot borrow from Ayn Rand's corpus of thought," Mr. Cline writes, "without eventually adopting the whole of it." The implications of this remark are clear: those who swallow Rand's work whole (as opposed to mere youthful dabblers) reveal their own inner need for a total ideology which, like Communism, provides canned answers to all difficult questions.

"Variant Text"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"Variant Text" by Allegra Goodman [June] is both a beautiful and delightful story. It has great freshness and artistry. Congratulations to the author.

WILLIAM EISNER
Newton, Massachusetts

Sandinistas & Contras

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Penn Kemble, in his exchange with Ronald Radosh [Letters from Readers, August, in a discussion of Mr. Kemble's review of *With the Contras* by Christopher Dickey, Books in Review, May], shows formidable skill in dispatching an argument, but the argument is not mine—and neither, I would warrant, is it Mr. Radosh's. I cannot help thinking that Mr. Kemble's promise of a "considered answer" would have been better served by more faithful attention to the question.

Mr. Kemble is at pains to demonstrate that "Marxist-Leninist movements . . . establish repressive and anti-American governments for their own purposes—not because, as we are so often told, we have 'pushed them into the arms of the Soviet Union.'" So often told, perhaps, that Mr. Kemble cannot stop hearing it. Neither Mr. Radosh nor I assert anything of the kind.

Mr. Radosh (rightly citing me as an ally) wrote that American support for the anti-Sandinista insurgents *results* in increasing repression because it "gives the hardline Marxists who govern Nicaragua an excuse to consolidate their power and to move as quickly as possible toward the Cuban-Soviet model state they desire." This language—note the words "excuse" and "desire"—expressly rejects the notion that American policy *motivates* the Sandinistas to repression. Neither is it remotely compatible with Mr. Kemble's imputation of a "faith that . . . when socialist revolutionaries go wrong, someone else must be to blame."

No one else is to blame. The Sandinistas are to blame. They are a blight on their people. Much though Mr. Kemble may enjoy reinforcing this view, we simply do not differ about it.

We do differ about the effects of the *contras*. Their supporters generally portray them as the only substantial impediment to a consolidated Leninist state. I believe they are more nearly the reverse.

Under conditions of war, the forces of nationalism dwarf domestic discontent as a determinant of loyalty to the state. Nicaraguan nationalism, for good historic reason, is particularly attuned to any combination that includes the United States and loyalists of the Somoza regime. The *contras* were founded and remain dominated by exactly this combination. However many *campesinos* they include (and it is worth pointing out that they have nothing near majority support even in the countryside), the *contras* are commanded by a military structure 92 percent of whose senior officers were officers of Somoza's National Guard. No serious student of the *contras* is willing to claim that these Guardsmen are meaningfully subordinate to civilian leaders like Arturo Cruz or Alfonso Robelo—and, more importantly, few Nicaraguans would be likely to care if they were.

These facts speak not only to the allegedly democratic character of the *contras* (although they speak eloquently to that) but also to the *contras'* effect on Sandinista consolidation. To understand this we must ask why the Sandinista *comandantes* have not managed in six years to achieve the monopoly of power that Castro had within six months. It is surely not because they do not want to. But neither is it because the *contras* have physically prevented them from doing so. Although diverting some resources and damaging others, the *contras* have never come close to challenging the preeminence of Sandinista power anywhere in Nicaragua.

The real barrier to consolidation is the disaffection of ordinary Nicaraguans. And what is clear is that the *contras* have diminished the importance of this disaffection. However unhappy they are with their government, Nicaraguans will never embrace the CIA and Enrique Bermúdez by way of alternative. For the duration of the *contra* war, the Sandinista government will exploit the population's nationalism, wartime passivity, and loathing for the old regime.

What is notable about Nicaraguans is their loyalty to the Church. No one has matched the reception accorded Cardinal Obando y Bravo on his return to Managua from Rome. In this an analogy to Poland, however imperfect, has some bearing. Of course it is said to be an iron law of Communist regimes that the loyalties of the people are a matter of indifference, that the state gives up nothing without a fight. But imagine what would become of General Jaruzelski in Poland were it not for his border with the Soviet Union. So long as America keeps Nicaragua free of "fraternal socialist assistance"—and there is surely consensus for that—the best hope for Nicaragua is Nicaraguans.

Not that these are the only grounds for opposing aid to the *contras*. They are not even the most important. Our obsession with changing the Nicaraguan government—when we have already disarmed it as a geostrategic threat—is a triumph of the trivial over the profound. For there are questions of true historical moment in Central and South America today. They are questions of democracy, of development, and of a start on social justice. If we had set out to destabilize our friends at their moment of greatest fragility, we could

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have thought up nothing better than an indefinite insurgent war. Sooner or later, we must begin to take them seriously.

[GOVERNOR] BRUCE BABBITT
Phoenix, Arizona

PENN KEMBLE writes:

A classic formula of those Arthur Koestler once referred to as "anti-anti-Communists" was this: X is not really a Communist, but our policies are helping make him into one. Governor Babbitt has developed a more refined version: the Sandinistas are Communists, but Nicaragua is not yet a "consolidated" Communist state. Our policies, however, are helping turn it into one. Perhaps readers will forgive me for finding some kinship between these two propositions, especially when it comes to their practical consequences.

Does Governor Babbitt believe that the U.S. deserves some blame for the grim nature of Sandinista rule? If I keep hearing this, it is merely because the Governor keeps saying it. On March 12 of this year he wrote in the New York *Times* that U.S. support for the *contras* allows "a repressive, unpopular regime to wrap itself in the flag and justify 'emergency measures' to a people who might otherwise resist them." In his letter he rejects the notion that the *contras* are "the only substantial impediment to a consolidated Leninist state." He concludes that "They are more nearly the reverse." (The reverse of an "impediment" sounds to me like an incentive.)

In a rejoinder to Jeane Kirkpatrick and Charles Krauthammer (Washington *Post*, March 30, 1986), Governor Babbitt went even farther: "If we had set about plotting to keep Daniel Ortega in Managua, could we have done any better than a CIA-financed rebellion with scarce support from the populace and no prospect of success?"

How can the Governor say that U.S. policy justifies (or even, in Ronald Radosh's more cautious term, provides "an excuse" for) Sandinista totalitarianism? That government's actions surely cannot be justified by any moral standard a democrat would accept. The justifications the Sandinistas offer for their actions do not seem to carry much weight with the Nicaraguan people, who are being brought under increasing micro-management by a regime which clearly fears them. These justifications are rejected by Nicaraguan democratic leaders who remain inside the country. Many of these figures have been under great pressure from the regime to denounce U.S. aid to the resistance, yet are bravely refusing to do so.

The Sandinistas' justifications have been rejected (with harsh consequences) by the Nicaraguan Catholic Church—whose cause Governor Babbitt seeks to embrace. Cardinal Obando y Bravo argued (Washington *Post*, May 12, 1986) that "the insurgent dissidents are now in the same position that the Sandinistas themselves once occupied, and, consequently, they have the same right that the Sandinistas had to seek aid from other nations, which they in fact did request and obtain in order to fight a terrible dictatorship." At the convention of the Inter-American Press Association held in Vancouver, British Columbia this past September, Violeta Chamorro, publisher of the banned *La Prensa*, rejected the Sandinistas' justifications for closing the paper as ". . . only a pretext to institute in Nicaragua a totalitarian political state which goes against the principles of the Nicaraguan people themselves."

Governor Babbitt would have us believe that disaffection with the regime has "diminished" and that the Nicaraguan people have yielded to repression because of the unwelcome support the U.S. has given to the armed resistance. The evidence does not support him—to the contrary.

There is more in Governor Babbitt's letter that deserves debate: I can touch here on only a few points.

Nicaragua may be too remote for the kind of "fraternal socialist assistance" that the Soviet Union has on occasion visited upon Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan. But Governor Babbitt should not belittle the effectiveness of the thousands—by some estimates 8,000—Soviets, Cubans, East Germans, Bulgarians, and other so-called "advisers" who actually help supervise the Sandinista army, its internal security services, its economy, and its communications. Nor should he underestimate the usefulness of the 350 T-55 tanks, the dozen or more helicopter gunships, and the vast quantities of howitzers, rocket-launchers, mortars, and assault rifles that the Soviet Union has been pouring into Nicaragua. The Soviet Union was not, after all, obliged to intervene directly to suppress the nonviolent Solidarity movement in Poland—the Polish army did the job itself. Given the extent of Soviet-bloc aid and operational control in Nicaragua, the massive military and police apparatus in that country could surely do the same to an unarmed opposition.

Governor Babbitt seems to believe the Sandinistas can be disarmed as a threat to their neighbors and to us without a change in their form of government. The United States sought just such a deal with the Sandinistas early in the Reagan administration—before there was an organized resistance. Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders asked the Sandinistas to leave their neighbors alone, and offered in return that the U.S. would leave them alone. The Sandinistas scorned him. Since then, both the U.S. and Nicaragua's four Central American neighbors have insisted that security guarantees from the Sandinistas are worthless unless there is democracy in Nicaragua. Governor Babbitt should listen more closely to the Central American democracies whose interests he means to uphold.

It is Governor Babbitt's harsh caricature of the resistance forces I find especially disturbing. It is one thing to believe that this movement is futile or even counterproductive; it is something else to jeer at it. How can anyone assert—in a country where elections and opinion polls are forbidden—that the resistance has "nothing near majority support even in the countryside"? The contention that 92 percent of the resistance commanders are former National Guardsmen comes from the same people who gave us the vastly exaggerated charge of "*contra* corruption" on the eve of last June's congressional vote. According to the State Department, the actual figure is 27 percent. But the truth is that none of these figures is precise, and that in any event such figures say nothing about the real character of a resistance movement.

There are criticisms that can fairly be made of the Nicaraguan resistance movement—and I have made some. But this movement is the largest volunteer people's army in Latin America since the Mexican revolution. It has gained support and leadership from some of Nicaragua's most distinguished democrats. Surely no one who values freedom has any right to treat it with contempt.

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The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name

Norman Podhoretz

LAST March, in a special issue commemorating its 120th anniversary, the *Nation* published an article by the novelist Gore Vidal entitled "The Empire Lovers Strike Back" which impressed me and many other people as the most blatantly anti-Semitic outburst to have appeared in a respectable American periodical since World War II. The *Nation* is a left-wing (or, some would say, a liberal) magazine run by an editor, Victor Navasky, who is himself Jewish. Yet one reader (who happened not to be Jewish) wrote in a personal letter to Navasky that he could not recall encountering "that kind of naked anti-Semitism" even in papers of the lunatic-fringe Right which specialize in attacks on Jews; to find its like one had to go back to the *Völkische Beobachter*. Nor was he the only reader to be reminded of the Nazi gutter press. "I thought I was back in the 30's reading *Der Stürmer*," wrote another.

Actually, however, it was not the crackpot racism of Julius Streicher that Vidal was drawing on, but sources closer to home. Prominent among these, I would guess, was Henry Adams, about whom Vidal has written admiringly and with whom he often seems to identify. Adams, as a descendant of two Presidents, was a preeminent member of the old American patriciate—the class to which Vidal also, if somewhat dubiously, claims to belong—and his resentment at the changes which came over the United States in the decades of industrialization and mass immigration after the Civil War knew no bounds. The country was being ruined, and Adams blamed it all on the Jews: "I tell you Rome was a blessed garden of paradise beside the rotten, unsexed, swindling, lying Jews, represented by Pierpont Morgan and the gang who have been manipulating the country for the last few years." It made no difference that J.P. Morgan was neither Jewish himself nor in any sense a representative of the Jews. For as Adams wrote in another of his letters: "The Jew has got into the soul. I see him—or her—now everywhere, and wherever he—or she—goes, there must remain a taint in the blood forever."

In Vidal's diatribe there is no explicit mention of blood, but there is its functional equivalent in the idea that Jews born in the United States nevertheless remain foreigners living here by the gracious sufferance of the natives. Incorrigibly alien though the Jews may be, however, they exercise enormous and malevolent power over the politics of what Vidal, conjuring up the long discredited spirit of 19th-century nativism, does not hesitate to call "the host country."

In the days of Henry Adams, and up until the establishment of the state of Israel, the great power of the Jews was supposedly used in the interests of world Jewry; today it is generally said to be deployed in the interest of the Jewish state, which Vidal, taking up this line, characterizes as a "predatory people . . . busy stealing other people's land in the name of an alien theocracy." Here is Vidal's version of how the conspiracy works:

> In order to get Treasury money for Israel (last year $3 billion), pro-Israel lobbyists must see to it that America's "the Russians are coming" squads are in place so that they can continue to frighten the American people into spending enormous sums for "defense," which also means the support of Israel in its never-ending wars against just about everyone.

As befits this resurrection of the two classic themes of anti-Semitic literature—the Jew as alien and the Jew as the conspiratorial manipulator of malign power dangerous to everyone else—Vidal's tone is poisonous. His every word drips with contempt and hatred, and underlying it all is a strong note of menace. The Jews had better watch out if they wish "to stay on among us"—not that "we" will necessarily permit them to stay even if they do begin minding their manners. Their only purpose, after all, is "to make propaganda and raise money for Israel," thereby impoverishing the rest of us and bringing the world closer and closer to a nuclear war.

MY OWN reaction on first reading this article was amazement: I could hardly believe my eyes. What amazed me was not

NORMAN PODHORETZ is the editor of COMMENTARY and the author of six books, the most recent of which is *The Bloody Crossroads: Where Literature and Politics Meet* (Simon and Schuster). His 1980 book, *The Present Danger*, has just been reissued in paperback by Touchstone.

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the fact that I myself and my wife Midge Decter had been singled out by Vidal as representative examples of the phenomenon he was claiming to expose. I had known Vidal personally for many years, and had followed his career, so I was well aware that he believed in getting back at anyone who had the temerity to criticize him—a crime that Midge Decter and I had each recently committed. Thus, commenting in my syndicated weekly column on his joint appearance with Norman Mailer at a fund-raising evening for the forthcoming PEN Congress in New York, I had observed that (like most of their fellow writers) Mailer and Vidal were hostile "to the kind of country they imagine America has become in the past hundred years: oppressive and repressive both at home and abroad." I further noted that "the fame and the glory and the riches" they themselves had achieved "make nonsense of their defamatory caricature of America as a country given over body and soul to materialism, puritanism, and philistinism."

Some weeks later in *Contentions*, the monthly publication of the Committee for the Free World (of which she is executive director), Midge Decter poked fun at Vidal's ideas about "the American empire." She also observed that Vidal had once again demonstrated that he "does not like his country."

So a retaliatory strike, or even two, was to be expected from Vidal. Why then should I have been amazed by it when it came? For two reasons. The lesser was that Vidal, who had always seemed to glory in his hostility to America as a mark of superior intellect, virtue, and patrician ancestry, now felt driven to deny what we had said about that hostility. "Of course I like my country," he wrote. "After all, I'm its current biographer." For Vidal to describe his historical novels in this way was as if Lytton Strachey had pointed to *Eminent Victorians* as evidence of his great fondness for the generation of his father. And this piece of defensive dishonesty seemed all the more remarkable in that it was accompanied by a restatement of some of the very ideas ("We stole other people's land. We murdered many of the inhabitants. We imposed our religion—and rule—on the survivors," etc.) Midge Decter had cited in the article he was trying to rebut.

But if I was surprised by the discovery that this famously fearless speaker of his own mind lacked the courage to call his own political convictions by their proper name, I was truly amazed by his introduction of the Jewish issue into an argument over the quality of American society and the nature of the American role in world affairs.

Neither of the two pieces Vidal was pretending to answer so much as mentioned Israel or had anything whatever to do with the particular concerns of the American Jewish community. One of them was about the attitudes of the American literary world toward the United States; the other dealt with the American role in Mexico, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. By dragging the issue of Jewishness into such a discussion, Vidal was recklessly exposing himself to the charge of anti-Semitism. Who, after all, but an anti-Semite would attempt to refute an opposing political position by interpreting it as a Jewish conspiracy against the rest of "us"?

But Vidal did more than merely introduce the Jewish question—as his anti-Semitic forebears liked to call it—into an unrelated discussion. He did more than sound the classic themes of anti-Semitic literature. He did all this without even bothering to conceal his true feelings. For example, in response to my statement that in America "the blessings of freedom and prosperity are greater and more widely shared than in any country known to human history," he said that I was wrapping myself in "our flag" and wearing it "like a designer kaftan." Again, in taking up Midge Decter's detailed challenge to his conception of American imperialism, Vidal countered that "She is [an Israeli] propagandist (paid for?), and that is what all this nonsense is about." And to make certain that his meaning would not be mistaken, he called us both an "Israeli Fifth Column."

So it went, literally *ad nauseam*.

Now that a bit of time has passed, I can see in retrospect that I should have been as little surprised by the way Vidal struck back as I was by the sheer fact that he did.

For one thing, I knew that he had long harbored feelings of resentment against what he considered the disproportionate influence of Jews in the American literary world. Many years earlier, he had joked about the domination of that world by a Jewish establishment of critics and editors which made room on the list of the important American novelists of his own generation only for an occasional "O.K. Goy" like himself. Yet as he undoubtedly recognized, Vidal had no standing (either then or now) as a novelist among serious literary critics of any ethnic background. What did make (and would continue to sustain) his reputation outside the world of commercial fiction and the television talk shows was his considerable talent as an essayist. But it was as a novelist that he clearly wished to be recognized, and he evidently blamed the Jewish establishment for preventing justice from being done to his work.

Since it served as the entering wedge for the return to America of an old tradition of cultural anti-Semitism, it is worth pausing over the concept of an all-powerful Jewish literary establishment. Precisely because it had played a part in Berlin and Vienna in the 1920's in forming the climate of opinion to which the Nazis could later appeal, the constituent ideas of this tradition

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came to be regarded as so repellent and dangerous that they were shunned and repressed in the years after World War II. Yet these also turned out to be the very years in which Jews were for the first time making a deep mark in the American literary world. Thus the period from the late 40's to the late 50's saw the emergence of novelists like Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth; of poets like Delmore Schwartz, Karl Shapiro, and Allen Ginsberg; of critics like Lionel Trilling, Alfred Kazin, and Irving Howe. And to top it all off, *Partisan Review*, many of whose editors and contributors were Jewish, also came in those years to be widely acknowledged as the leading American literary magazine.

Naturally enough, this development, new and interesting as it was, gave rise to a good deal of sociological and historical discussion, and in the course of this discussion Jews were often said to have found a place in, or even to have taken over, the "establishment." Except for a degree of exaggeration, there was nothing wrong with such talk —until, that is, it began to be combined with the allegation that a conspiratorial network had been created between Jewish editors and Jewish critics for the purpose of pushing and promoting Jewish novelists and poets to the virtual exclusion of everyone else. At first this allegation was made only in shamefaced and guilty whispers. But eventually it achieved open expression in a *Playboy* interview with Truman Capote which was even more outspoken than Vidal's apparently whimsical complaint about discrimination against *goyim*. According to Capote, a "Jewish mafia" had taken control of "much of the literary scene through the influence of the quarterlies and intellectual magazines." He went on:

> All these publications are Jewish-dominated and this particular coterie employs them to make or break writers by advancing or withholding attention. . . . Bernard Malamud and Saul Bellow and Philip Roth and Isaac Bashevis Singer and Norman Mailer are all fine writers but they're not the *only* writers in the country, as the Jewish mafia would have us believe. I could give you a list of excellent writers . . .; the odds are you haven't heard of most of them for the simple reason that the Jewish mafia has systematically frozen them out of the literary scene.

The great irony was that the Jewish editors and critics who were supposed to be pushing and promoting Jewish novelists and poets in this way were in reality their harshest, and often their only, critics. So it was that Bellow and the others were much more roughly treated in *Partisan Review* (and COMMENTARY) than they were anywhere else. Nor was it even remotely the case that except for an occasional "O.K. Goy," a writer had to be Jewish in order to get attention. In addition to Capote and Vidal themselves, who were hardly starving for attention, there were such widely read and discussed novelists as Carson McCullers, William Styron, John Updike, John Cheever, James Jones, Flannery O'Connor, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin; and there were such famous poets as Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Theodore Roethke, Randall Jarrell, Richard Wilbur, Elizabeth Bishop, and Sylvia Plath. All these writers, it might be added, were treated with much greater tenderness by critics like Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, and Cleanth Brooks than their Jewish contemporaries could generally expect from such Jewish critics as Trilling, Howe, or Philip Rahv.

About twenty years ago, I myself began trying to blow the whistle on the spreading notion of an all-powerful Jewish literary establishment by arguing that it was not only untrue but that it also represented the revival of a dangerous anti-Semitic canard. I did not, however, argue that Vidal and Capote, whose contribution to its revival I cited even then, were anti-Semitic. On the contrary, I exonerated them. I said that so effective had the taboo been on any open expression of hostility toward Jews since the fall of Hitler that Vidal and Capote, like almost everyone else in America of a certain age, were entirely unfamiliar with the traditional ideologies of anti-Semitism; and it was this very ignorance that had emboldened them to spread an idea they would have been ashamed of embracing if they had been aware of its history and pedigree.

I STILL think this may have been true of Capote (and I think it may also explain why so many people, including a few who are discussed below, are unable nowadays to recognize anti-Semitism when it hits them in the face). But it was obviously too kind to Vidal. As the years went by, the issue of Jewish literary power faded, but not Vidal's animus against Jews, which sought, and in due course found, a new outlet in the issue of Israel.

Most critics of Israel are more concerned with attacking the state than with attacking the Jews as such. With Vidal it was the other way around. In fact, his loathing for Israel was no greater than his loathing for America; the one often even seemed a function of the other, with Israel's main crime being its alliance with and resemblance to the United States. Conversely, and no doubt with the example of Henry Adams to inspire him, he seemed to blame the putative decline of the United States on its susceptibility to the corruptions of Jewish influence, operating not only through the contemporary descendants of J.P. Morgan (symbolized for Vidal by the Chase Manhattan Bank) but also through the Pentagon and "our lunatic Right."

This anti-Jewish animus occasionally peeped through Vidal's essays and interviews. Once, for example, he referred to Hilton Kramer, a critic who has rarely if ever dealt with Jewish topics or with Israel in his writings, as "the Tel Aviv Hilton." But as in this instance, Vidal was always care-

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ful to hide his anti-Jewish animus behind a campy façade, which allowed him, if challenged, to claim that he was after all only joking.

Indeed, even when for the first time he came more or less fully out of the anti-Semitic closet, he still thought it the better part of prudence to protect himself by posing as the spokesman for a minority which was being persecuted by the Jews.

The occasion, which served as a kind of dress rehearsal, or tryout, for "The Empire Lovers Strike Back," was an article called "*Some* Jews and *the* Gays" that was also published in the *Nation* and that was also aimed at Midge Decter and me —at her for the memoir she had written of summers spent in a largely homosexual community on Fire Island in the 1960's, at me for publishing it in COMMENTARY (under the title "The Boys on the Beach").*

Unlike her later piece in *Contentions*, "The Boys on the Beach" made no reference to Vidal, but as an early pioneer of gay liberation, he took violent exception to some of the things it said about homosexuality. To be sure, time has not been kind to Vidal's article, which sneeringly dismisses the idea, propounded by "The Boys on the Beach" and now so grimly confirmed by the AIDS epidemic, that there is a suicidal impulse at work in homosexual promiscuity. Nevertheless, Vidal's sneers would have been fair enough if they had been confined to Midge Decter's knowledge of the subject, her judgment, her prose. But Vidal did not confine himself to these things; instead he broadened out into a blast against "a group of New York Jewish publicists" who

> know that should the bad times return, the Jews would be singled out yet again. Meanwhile, like so many Max Naumanns (Naumann was a German Jew who embraced Nazism), the new class passionately supports our ruling class—from the Chase Manhattan Bank to the Pentagon to the op-ed page of the *Wall Street Journal*—while holding in fierce contempt what they think our rulers hold in contempt: faggots, blacks, . . . and the poor. . . .

The anti-Semitism here was brazenly obvious to anyone with eyes to see. But as Vidal correctly sensed in writing the article, and as the editor of the *Nation* probably figured in deciding to publish it, anyone speaking on behalf of an aggrieved minority can attack the Jews with relative impunity, especially if he turns the tables by representing *them* as the oppressors. Thus, just as the idea of a conspiracy against helpless Gentile writers by an all-powerful Jewish literary "mafia" had been tolerated in the early 60's, so a similar idea about the relation of blacks to Jews had been tolerated during the bitter New York City teachers' strike of 1968. Prior to this point, anyone making anti-Semitic statements had been in effect banished from respectable society and consigned to the lunatic fringe. But now, far from being penalized in this way, blacks could proclaim (as the *African-American Teachers Forum* did) that "The Jew" deliberately and "systematically" (the same word Capote used) "keeps our men from becoming teachers and principals and he keeps our children ignorant," and still be excused and justified by liberals, including Jewish liberals, and even rewarded with foundation grants. (A few who said such things, and worse, have since become prominent in New York politics.)

The reaction to "*Some* Jews and *the* Gays" demonstrated that the same license was now being extended to homosexuals. Not only was there no outcry against this article after its appearance in the *Nation*; and not only did many people take the position that Vidal's rage was understandable and perhaps even warranted; but the collection of essays in which it was reprinted (under the title "Pink Triangle and Yellow Star") went on to win a National Book Critics Circle Award. When Ezra Pound's *The Pisan Cantos*, which also contained anti-Semitic passages, was awarded the Bollingen Prize in 1949, there were protests even from some who considered Pound a great poet. But when a book by Vidal, a writer no one considers great, was awarded a literary prize, no protests were heard, and some reviewers even singled out the offending essay for special praise.

Obviously, then, both Vidal and the editor of the *Nation* had been right in their assessment of the risks involved in publishing "*Some* Jews and *the* Gays." Even the caution shown in the choice of title proved to be unnecessary.

With this experience behind him, Vidal must surely have assumed that he could get away with the same anti-Semitic trick when he decided to play it again in "The Empire Lovers Strike Back." Yet I at first thought that this time he and the *Nation* had miscalculated.

It was one thing to attack "some" Jews for criticizing homosexuality; and if the attack spilled over into abusive remarks about Jews in general, well, that could be dismissed as a forgivable expression of that cleansing "rage" everyone has come to expect from oppressed minorities fighting for their rights. But it was quite another thing to make abusive charges against Jews for supporting Israel. Here no pretense at limiting the attack to "some" Jews (that is, the neoconservatives) could provide protection, since virtually all American Jews, including those who detest the neoconservatives as much as Vidal does, were bound to feel themselves equally implicated. If, as Vidal charged, their support of Israel proved that Jews of a neoconservative bent did not really belong in America, then neither did liberal Jews or radical Jews who also support Israel; and if supporting Israel made the neoconservatives into a

* September 1980.

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"fifth column" (which is to say, agents of a foreign power and even traitors), there was no way the rest of the Jewish community, which was at least as pro-Israel as any neoconservative, could escape being tarred with the same accusation.

If Vidal had made a mistake, so, I thought, had the *Nation*. In recent years, under Victor Navasky, the *Nation* had regularly published articles by such virulently anti-Israel propagandists as Edward Said (a member of the PLO National Council) and Alexander Cockburn. But while attacking Israel, and doing everything in its power to delegitimize the Jewish state, the *Nation* had always piously affirmed Israel's right to exist. Yet here, in a special anniversary issue, the magazine was opening its pages to a piece advocating a cutoff of all American aid to Israel—which was tantamount to calling for the destruction of the state by its Soviet-armed enemies.

This was not all. Like the PLO itself, which it supports, the *Nation* had always insisted on the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Yet by publishing an anti-Zionist piece that was so obviously anti-Semitic, it cast serious doubt on its own belief in the reality of this distinction.

For these reasons, I was confident that a storm of protest would be unleashed against Vidal and the *Nation*, and I therefore resisted the urgings of many people that I "do something." Obviously, as an interested party, I was not in the best position to make the case that had to be made. Nor was I in the least concerned about defending myself personally. Although I am as thin-skinned as the next man, I took Vidal's article not as a personal attack on me at all but as an attack on Jews in general. Consequently, what I most hoped for was not that others would spring to my defense, but that a protest would be mounted by people sympathetic to the *Nation*'s left-wing political position who would say that while they detested everything Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, and all the other neoconservatives stood for, and while nothing made them happier than seeing neoconservatives raked over the coals, they were outraged by the reintroduction of anti-Semitism into American political discourse in general and their own political community in particular.

And indeed, about a week after Vidal's piece appeared, just such a protest came from the very heartland of that community, the *Village Voice*. Under the rubric "Jew-Roasting," its press critic, Geoffrey Stokes, wrote:

> Happy 120th Birthday, *Nation*! On the other hand, what the *hell* was Gore Vidal's anti-Semitic screed doing in the special anniversary issue? Not even clever, . . . Vidal's piece . . . had the unsettling effect of making me briefly sympathetic to Podhoretz.

Gratifying though this was, however, it was followed by complete silence from the Left. In the *Nation* itself, three issues went by with no letters to the editor, and when an inquiry was made to its editorial offices, the answer was that the mail on Vidal had not been unusually heavy, that it was split evenly pro and con, and that some of it would eventually be run.

Meanwhile, wherever I went in those weeks, I would ask the people I encountered about the Vidal piece, only to find that hardly anyone had read it. This included people who had attended the anniversary party at which more than 3,000 copies of the offending issue had been distributed, as well as other self-professed friends of and subscribers to the *Nation*. It was good to learn that the *Nation* (which claims a circulation of 70,000), had such a small readership, but I did not think the Vidal piece should be allowed to sneak by unnoticed. In my view, ignoring it would only be taken by other anti-Semites as a license to resume saying things on which they had mercifully been choking for so long.

It was at this point that a letter was sent to twenty-nine friends and supporters of the *Nation* whose names were selected both from the magazine's masthead and from the congratulatory messages which had appeared in the anniversary issue. They were: Floyd Abrams; Bella Abzug; Leonard Bernstein; Norman Birnbaum; Bill Bradley; Arthur L. Carter; Ramsey Clark; Arthur C. Danto; Osborn Elliott; Richard Falk; Frances FitzGerald; Fred Friendly; Seymour Hersh; Arthur Hertzberg; Charlayne Hunter-Gault; Peter Jennings; Edward Kennedy; Edward I. Koch; Elinor Langer; Eugene McCarthy; Sidney Morgenbesser; Aryeh Neier; Robert Silvers; Paul Simon; Gloria Steinem; Rose Styron; Mike Wallace; Tom Wicker; Roger Wilkins.

It would later be reported in the press that I had demanded that these people repudiate the Vidal article. But what the letter, signed not by me but by Marion Magid, the managing editor of COMMENTARY, actually said was this:

> In connection with a projected article, we are asking a number of friends and supporters of the *Nation* whether they have seen fit to protest against the contribution by Gore Vidal to the 120th anniversary issue ("The Empire Lovers Strike Back"). Could you let us know whether you have made such a protest, either in private or in a letter for publication?

In the four weeks that followed the mailing of this letter we received only seven replies. By that time the *Nation* had also begun running letters in its correspondence columns, of which three were from people who had been on our list. Eliminating overlaps,* this came to a total of

* The figures I gave in the newspaper column I later wrote were slightly off because I forgot to take overlapping into account.

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eight out of twenty-nine. Of the eight, only five (the attorney Floyd Abrams; Professor Richard Falk of Princeton; Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg; Professor Sidney Morgenbesser of Columbia; and Aryeh Neier, the human-rights activist) said they saw anything wrong with the article or with the *Nation*'s decision to publish it.

Of the others, two (the sociologist Norman Birnbaum and Tom Wicker of the New York *Times*), responding directly to Marion Magid, attacked her letter as an impropriety, while either saying nothing about Vidal at all (Birnbaum) or explicitly denying that his article was anti-Semitic (Wicker). The third, the journalist Roger Wilkins, writing to the *Nation* for publication, called Vidal's piece "splendid." By contrast, Wilkins said, the attacks on it as anti-Semitic were "ugly mumblings," a species of McCarthyism, and a threat to the First Amendment.

Striking a note that would be heard over and over again from defenders of Vidal, Wilkins declared:

> Scoundrels have many last refuges. One is to attack as anti-Semitic any criticism of the policies of any given government of Israel or of any supporters of Israel, no matter how frothing those supporters may be.

Not content with defending Vidal against the charge of anti-Semitism, Wilkins even denied that his piece was anti-Israel. Like himself, Wilkins wrote, Vidal "apparently" believed "that one can criticize an Israeli government policy or one advocated by a supporter of Israel as being both dangerous to peace and to Israel's security without being either anti-Israel or anti-Semitic."

In other words, the critics of Israel are allowed to say anything they want, no matter how vile, about the state and its supporters, but it is McCarthyism and a threat to the First Amendment to criticize *them*.

To put the same idea another way: it is permissible to make anti-Semitic statements, but it is impermissible to call such statements anti-Semitic.

But what of the twenty-one who did not respond to Marion Magid's letter? What did their silence mean? Some weeks later, after the controversy had attracted a great deal of publicity, three of them (Fred Friendly of the Columbia School of Journalism; the writer Elinor Langer; and Senator Paul Simon of Illinois) finally got around to communicating their dislike of Vidal's piece either to Marion Magid or to me. All three, however, said that they felt no compelling reason to protest against its publication.

As for the other eighteen, one can only speculate. It may be that the politicians among them (Mayor Koch, Senator Bradley, Senator Kennedy) were never shown the letter by whoever handles their mail. This may also have been the case with the media personalities (Peter Jennings of ABC, Mike Wallace of CBS, Charlayne Hunter-Gault of PBS) or with a busy celebrity like Leonard Bernstein. It is even possible that they never saw Vidal's article (a copy of which, by the way, had been enclosed with the letter).

Nevertheless, whatever the reasons might be, one glaring and ugly fact remained: a large number of prominent liberals and leftists who had publicly associated themselves in one way or another with the *Nation*, and whose names had appeared in one capacity or another in the very issue containing so blatantly anti-Semitic an article, had not been sufficiently outraged to register disapproval or to express a protest. Nor did many others on the Left respond by (to borrow an image Vidal had used in congratulating himself for candor) calling a spade a spade: by, that is, describing Vidal's article as a foul anti-Semitic outburst and expressing dismay or disgust at the fact that a magazine professedly devoted to liberal ideals should have given house room to such an article.

A few did. Stipulating that "Knocking Podhoretz up the side of the head for an inane foreign policy is like shooting fish in a barrel," one liberal reader still characterized Vidal's article as a "leering, taunting, look-at-how-clever-I-am anti-Semitic assault." He also blamed the *Nation*'s editor for permitting Vidal to "break the bounds of discourse."

Another reader, dissociating himself even more vigorously from me and Midge Decter, asked whether Vidal was "sallying forth to paste yellow stars on those of us 'foreigners' whose Americanism is questionable because we like Israel?"

A third, summing up the case, wrote:

> The implication—that American Jews who support Israel are traitors to their country—is pure anti-Semitism. . . . I do not like neoconservativism and I do not like Norman Podhoretz. I don't like him, as a Jew, as an American, as a Zionist, and as a leftist. But I'd rather see his published ideas criticized fairly than to see him accused of treason without evidence, especially when this accusation extends to me.

Yet in the weeks immediately following the publication of Vidal's article, these three (or stretching a point to include Floyd Abrams, four) were the only letters to the *Nation* from liberals or leftists that seemed to me commensurate with the provocation.

Of the other two protests from the Left published by the *Nation*, one came from Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg. A former president of the American Jewish Congress, Rabbi Hertzberg had been heard to rail privately against the article and had promised to denounce it in the strongest possible terms. In the end, however, all he managed to produce was a letter in which he described the piece as a "personal quarrel with Norman Podho-

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retz and Midge Decter," said that he was "delighted" with Vidal's complimentary remarks about Peace Now, and could not even bring himself to use the term "anti-Semitism" at all. As for the second such liberal protest, while denouncing Vidal "for exhibiting a snide anti-Jewishness," it spent more space explaining that the American Jewish Committee, despite its sponsorship of COMMENTARY, was not, as Vidal had ignorantly charged in passing, an organization of "the far Right."

Neither this letter, nor Hertzberg's, was written in the name of the Jewish organizations with which their authors were associated; nor did any other Jewish organization speak up in these first few weeks (though both the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League would subsequently be heard from). A reporter for an Israeli newspaper, who later set out to find out why the Jewish defense agencies had been so quiet, discovered that the feeling was that "Norman can take care of himself." But the issue was not "Norman," and to define it in those terms was to do what Hertzberg was the first (but, as we shall see, far from the last) to do: it was to turn an anti-Semitic assault into "a personal quarrel" and thereby to trivialize it. From there it was only a short step to the prominent lay Jewish leader who went around saying that "Podhoretz and Vidal deserve each other." This idea that anti-Semitism and a protest against anti-Semitism are on an equal moral footing would also be echoed in the weeks ahead. But not usually by people carrying a mandate from the American Jewish community to defend it against anti-Semitism.

AFTER nearly a month of waiting for a serious protest to materialize, it finally dawned on me that I had been wrong to think that Vidal and the *Nation* had made a mistake from their own point of view with "The Empire Lovers Strike Back." If so, things were even more ominous than they had seemed at first. It was bad enough that a presumably reputable author should see fit to write a blatantly anti-Semitic article; it was even worse that a magazine professing devotion to liberal values should see fit to publish such an article; but what was worst of all was that so few of the magazine's friends and admirers had been willing to raise their voices against it. Therefore, in the column I now decided I had no choice but to write, it was the theme of liberal silence I emphasized. It was, I concluded, "a silence as deep as the moral pit into which the *Nation* itself has fallen in welcoming the unabashed return to American political discourse of a murderous poison against which the only antidote is the revulsion of decent people."

A few days before this column was published, first in the New York *Post* and then in the Washington *Post* and a number of other papers throughout the United States, the *New Republic* ran an editorial denouncing Vidal's article as anti-Semitic on the ground that his target was not just the Jewish state but Jews in general, and that his accusations against Podhoretz and Decter as aliens, and even "in essence" traitors, applied "by extension [to] all American Jews who support Israel."

The *New Republic* likes to regard itself as a liberal magazine, and in some sense it is. But its hatred of Soviet totalitarianism, its belief in the need for American power to contain Soviet expansionism, and its strong support of Israel—not to mention a host of differences over domestic issues—have placed it politically on the opposite side of the *Nation* in recent years. Consequently, its editorial on Vidal could no more be taken as coming from the *Nation*'s own political community than an earlier protest by the neoconservative Catholic writer Michael Novak (who in his syndicated column had been the first to call attention to "a piece of bigotry and nativism by Gore Vidal worthy of the anti-Semitism of the KKK") or the indignant letter to the *Nation* by the New Right activist Paul Weyrich.

In any event, to judge by the reaction to its editorial, which seemed to attract more attention than the Vidal article itself had done, the *New Republic* is much more widely and more carefully read than the *Nation*. No sooner had it appeared than I began to get calls and letters requesting more information; and whereas before it was I who had had to ask people about the Vidal article, only to discover that very few had seen or heard about it, now everywhere I went, everyone, it seemed, was talking about it. And when, hard upon the *New Republic* editorial, my own column appeared, the talk became even louder and more insistent.

Nor was this second wave of reaction confined to talk. Before the storm finally subsided two months or so later, at least twenty pieces had been published about the episode in American newspapers and magazines, and nearly half as many again in other countries, including England, France, Germany, Australia, and Israel.

From this second wave of reaction I learned that there is something worse than silence in the face of anti-Semitism, and that is a willful blindness in the face of it. Here the blindness took three different but overlapping forms. One was the outright denial that Vidal's piece was anti-Semitic. The second was to treat the article as part of a longstanding personal feud between Vidal and me. The third was to affect a lofty neutrality as between two equally unpleasant and unacceptable points of view.

LEADING the pack of those who simply denied that Vidal's piece was anti-Semitic were Vidal and Navasky themselves. In

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the first wave, replying to the letters on his piece in the *Nation* itself, Vidal had not only ignored the charge of anti-Semitism but had adopted the strategy of heaping abuse on the correspondents who leveled it at him. One of these correspondents, he said, "needs psychiatric attention of a sort that I cannot provide."* Another he advised to "join the Israeli Army." To a third, he cited "the hysterical tone of these letters" as evidence of the strength of his argument. To a fourth he countered that "the Podhoretzes are doing more to arouse the essential anti-Semitism of the American people than anyone since Father Coughlin."

As for Navasky, he bemoaned the "sad fact" that "when a Gentile criticizes Israel or raises fundamental questions about its connection to American Jewry he or she is often said to be anti-Semitic; when a Jew does so he or she is said to be self-hating." Going so far as to concede that "such ugly accusations" were "understandable in view of Vidal's provocative framing of the issue," Navasky still insisted that they arose out of a misreading of Vidal's "idiom of irony"—and irony, of course, "should not be read literally." Instead of being called bad names, Vidal should be acclaimed for his courage in "violating the taboo that forbids the discussion of the relationship of the American Jewish community to the state of Israel. . . ."

This was too much for Irving Howe, the editor of the socialist magazine *Dissent*. Reaffirming his often stated distaste for Podhoretz and Decter, and referring to Navasky as a "decent and humane man," Howe nevertheless not only lashed into Vidal's "racist diatribe" ("It is many years since I have read anything quite like this in a serious magazine"); he called the Editor's Note in defense of it "still more shocking" than the fact that the *Nation* had printed Vidal's piece:

> Whatever are the *Nation* editors talking about? What taboo? Many of us have publicly been engaged in precisely this discussion for years now, and one need only look through the files of various magazines—Left, Right, and Center—to see how fierce this debate has been.
>
> Vidal's piece aroused disgust not because of any issue it raised or taboo it violated, but because of the terms in which it was couched—terms about as close to anti-Semitism as anyone not an openly declared anti-Semite would reach.

Navasky's Editor's Note was also too much for the veteran Old Leftist Morris U. Schappes, the editor of *Jewish Currents*. Schappes "admonished the *Nation* as a devoted friend" for its failure to perceive that Vidal's article was "smelly with anti-Semitism" and for defending it on the false ground that Vidal had raised questions about the relation of American Jews to Israel that no one else had previously dared to ask.

Unchastened by rebukes even from such friendly quarters, Navasky stuck throughout to the same line. But this time, in the second wave, Vidal himself did deign to notice that he was being charged with anti-Semitism. In a call made to the Washington *Post* after my column had appeared there, he stated:

> Anyone who says he is not an anti-Semite is probably one, and so I shall not dignify the dread Norman (Poddy)† Podhoretz's characterization of me in these pages as "a virulent anti-Semite" with a defense where no offense of that nature exists or has ever existed.

In addition to thus fingering himself here by doing precisely what he says an anti-Semite would do, Vidal requested that the *Post* reprint his *Nation* article. This request the *Post* thereupon honored so that, it explained, readers could answer for themselves the question posed in its headline: "Was the Vidal Article Anti-Semitic?" (Will the *Post*, the *New Republic* subsequently wondered, "reprint the writings of Louis Farrakhan or Lyndon LaRouche when next its readers seem puzzled by a columnist's criticisms?")

FIRST out of the gate in the race to join in denying that Vidal's piece was anti-Semitic sprang Edwin M. Yoder, Jr., another Washington *Post* columnist. Yoder, in his courteous Southern way, allowed as how it was "unfair" of Vidal to charge me with being "more interested in Israel than in this country" (is *that* what he charged me with?) but "The truth is that Norman Podhoretz asked for it, not only by firing the first shot at Vidal in connection with an entirely different subject, but by professing an ostentatious indifference to early American history."

What Yoder is referring to here is a story Vidal told in his article about a remark I am supposed to have made to him twenty-five years ago, to the effect that to me, as the child of immigrants, the Civil War was as remote as the War of the Roses. Though I have no memory of mak-

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* This was not the only time the issue of psychiatric disorder came up. The *New Republic*'s otherwise excellent editorial was marred by a concluding sentence stating that Vidal was "ready for the funny farm." But there is nothing in the least crazy about Vidal, and to suggest that he needs psychiatric treatment is to diminish his responsibility for his foul anti-Semitic ideas. In using the phrase, however, the *New Republic* inadvertently provoked a moment of morbid comic relief in the form of the following letter from John Hinckley, Jr., written from the psychiatric hospital to which he has been confined since shooting President Reagan: "I resent the fact that you equate 'anti-Semitism' with insanity. In the first place, Gore Vidal is anti-Zionist, not anti-Jewish, and in the second place, being opposed to Zionism (which is both racist and militaristic) is not a sign of mental illness. If anything, it is patriotic. . . . The easiest way to defame someone and his opinions is to label him as 'loony' and 'ready for the funny farm.' It happens to me all the time. The opinions of Gore Vidal and myself are just as valid as yours, and just because we disagree with you does not mean we are crazy."

† This is what Vidal called me throughout his *Nation* article. It is a nickname invented by him, not one by which I have ever been known by anyone else.

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ing the remark, I may well have said something like it. But whether or not I did—and if I did, I was certainly putting Vidal on—Yoder's notion that I deserved to be answered with an anti-Semitic onslaught twenty-five years later takes the breath away. But of course Vidal's onslaught was not, in Yoder's view, anti-Semitic at all. It was only "mischievous and cutting . . . , in Vidal's best polemical manner."

No more than Roger Wilkins before him was Yoder satisfied with defending Vidal against the charge of anti-Semitism. He also counterattacked with the accusation that I, like many (most?) American Jews, have tried to silence any and all criticism of Israel by denouncing such criticism as anti-Semitic, even while pretending otherwise:

> Podhoretz graciously concedes that "it is possible to criticize Israel without being anti-Semitic." Thanks, we needed that. But has Podhoretz noticed that if one is critical of an Israeli policy one may be accused of attacking Israel's legitimacy? And, just beyond that, of being a crypto anti-Semite? It was that very logic that drove Podhoretz to mistake Vidal's hard-edged teasing for anti-Semitism.

A similar argument was advanced by another columnist, William Pfaff, writing in the *International Herald-Tribune*, who moreover took it upon himself to deliver a lecture on how "reasonable people" should conduct themselves in discussing the subject of Israel. He graciously conceded in his turn that Jews have a right to support Israel "without having imputed to them a lack of patriotism toward the country of which they are citizens." His main concern, however, was clearly to establish the right of "an American to criticize or oppose the policies of the state of Israel . . . without an anti-Semitic motivation being imputed."

Once again, then, the issue was shifted from the appearance of an anti-Semitic article in a respectable left-wing magazine to the alleged efforts by people like me to silence any and all criticism of Israel. On this point Pfaff let it be known that he knew whereof he spoke: "I have . . . been myself denounced by Mr. Podhoretz as anti-Semitic because of things I wrote about Israel's conduct during the siege of Beirut in 1982," he told his readers. What he did not tell them was that in one of these "things" he had begun by asserting that in Israel's conduct "Hitler's work goes on," and he had concluded by predicting that Hitler might soon "find rest in Hell" through "the knowledge that the Jews themselves, in Israel, have finally accepted his own way of looking at things." In my article "J'Accuse,"* I did indeed denounce these words (*not* Pfaff himself) as anti-Semitic. Nicholas von Hoffman, another columnist who had used similar words, had the good grace to withdraw them in response to the same criticism. But not Pfaff—who, in addition, had and has the gall to feel aggrieved and victimized by the fact that he was called to account.

Since Pfaff (like Yoder a decent man who is intelligent enough to know better) remains convinced that comparing Israel to Nazi Germany represents a "reasonable" application to the Jewish state "of the same moral and political judgments as one applies to the conduct of other states," it is no wonder that all he can see in Vidal is an innocent "critic" of Israel like himself. What he does not see is that it is *he*, and Yoder and Wilkins and Wicker, who erase the line between legitimate criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism by their unwillingness or inability to distinguish between the former and a clear case of the latter like the Vidal article (or like his own comparisons of Israel with Nazi Germany).

IF DENIAL was one form taken by this blindness to anti-Semitism, a second was the treatment of Vidal's article as part of a longstanding personal feud with me and/or Midge Decter. "A Big-League Literary Feud," announced the headline of a story in *Newsweek* which went on to describe it as "the sort of literary quarrel that had everything going for it," with "the prospect of more vitriolic prose, more character assassinations, and, in all likelihood, more broken friendships."

Several newspapers also played the story largely for its gossip value. "The dirty little war of words between writer Gore Vidal and conservative columnist Norman Podhoretz appears to have gone nuclear," brightly chirped a reporter in the Washington *Post* Style section. "Long bombarding each other with verbal abuse, Vidal and Podhoretz have now engaged in an exchange that is by all accounts ugly, burying the issues in an atomic barrage of name-calling."

From this kind of trivialization the third form of denial naturally followed. On National Public Radio, Rod MacLeish declared a plague on both our houses for "polluting" public discourse, but he was more incensed at me than at Vidal. Unjustly to accuse someone of anti-Semitism, he said, is almost as base as anti-Semitism itself. But he was so busy explaining to me that it is not anti-Semitic to criticize the economic policies [*sic*!] of the Israeli government that he never got around to explaining how what he himself described as Vidal's appeal to "an ancient American bigotry" differed from anti-Semitism.

The same trick of morally equating Vidal's anti-Semitism with my protest against it was used by Jody Powell in the Los Angeles *Times*. Deploring all the attention being paid to this "grand wrist-flapping dither" at a time when "deficits and exchange rates" were crying out for discussion, Powell proceeded to devote an entire column to it himself:

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* COMMENTARY, September 1982.

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> What we have here is a trio of aging, self-righteous ideologues bent on exposing the absurdities of their intellectual configuration to all who can stomach the spectacle. What emerges is that they are more alike than different.

Powell therefore "steadfastly refused to choose" because "it is impossible to attack one without appearing to be allied with the other."

But this was only impossible because Powell also "steadfastly refused" to recognize anti-Semitism when he saw it; to those not so blinded, like Paul Berman of the *Village Voice* (which in the second wave as in the first acquitted itself more honorably than any other left-wing publication), there was no question about which side to take as between an anti-Semitic article and a protest against it:

> Who but my discombobulated friends at the *Nation* could so bollix things that right-minded leftists have no choice but to rise to the defense of Norman Podhoretz?
>
> I rise. . . . The *Nation* had no business publishing Gore Vidal's spleen. . . . And why must the editors of the *Nation*, having made the mistake of publishing this horrendous stuff in the first place, pass it off as "irony"?

In describing both waves of reaction to the Vidal article, I have omitted the protests that came from people outside the circle of friends and supporters of the *Nation*—writers like William Safire, R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., Jeane Kirkpatrick, Richard John Neuhaus, Jeffrey Hart, and David Evanier who are neither liberals nor radicals and whose general political views are closer to mine than to the *Nation*'s.* For such people, protesting against Vidal and the *Nation* was as unproblematic as it was hard for leftists who were reluctant to give political aid and comfort to an opponent like me. But as a diabolical fate would have it, the conservative political community was soon to face a similar test of its own.

Joseph Sobran is a syndicated columnist, a commentator on the CBS radio series "Spectrum," and a senior editor of *National Review* (a magazine whose standing on the Right is comparable to, though much higher than, the position on the Left occupied by the *Nation*). For some years now, and especially since the Lebanon war, when he too wrote a few "things" about Israel's "conduct," he has been increasingly unfriendly to the Jewish state. During the Bitburg controversy, in defending the President's decision to visit a German military cemetery in which SS men were buried, he also struck a number of people as decidedly unfriendly to the American Jewish community. Remonstrations were made to him in private about the insensitivity to Jewish concerns reflected in his Bitburg columns, and he was even caricatured as a latter-day Nazi in a small-town paper which had carried those columns.

To all this he responded by defending himself in print against what he indignantly denounced as Jewish attempts to intimidate and silence him. He would not, he vowed, be intimidated; he would not be silenced. And he was as good as his word. Over the following months, he seemed to let no opportunity slip for attacking Israel and American support for Israel. As bitter an opponent of the Left as can be found, he was even driven to seize on a book attacking Zionism from the Left as a vehicle for the amazing declaration that he had never seen a good case made, except by Jews (whose arguments, of course, could not be trusted), for the American alliance with Israel.

Nor was this the only instance when the Jewish issue drove Sobran into making common cause with people or positions he would normally be the first to attack. The most egregious example was his criticism of the American strike on Libya. This was so uncharacteristic a stance for a hardline conservative hawk like Sobran to take, and so inconsistent with his general world view, that it could only cause his regular readers to wonder how he had come to such a pass. Demonstrating his fearless disregard of the "gas-chamber rhetoric" that would no doubt be thrown at him, Sobran provided the materials for dispelling that wonder:

> The Israeli lobby is, of course, the most powerful lobby in America. That is ultimately why Congress so quickly endorsed a direct military strike against Libya, while it quibbles endlessly about whether aid to the *contras* in Nicaragua might lead, someday, to American military involvement in Central America. Qaddafi is an enemy of Israel. Communist Nicaragua isn't. It's an enemy of America, period.
>
> So we fight Qaddafi, and maybe, the administration hints, Syria and Iran as well. Ostensibly the issue is "terrorism," but that sounds more and more like a surrogate word for enemies of Israel.

Having thus explained how Congress was manipulated by the Jews into approving the Libyan strike, he went on in another column to explain why the New York *Times* also applauded Reagan for this misconceived action:

> On the issue of Libya, the *Times* sounds like *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. It even chides our allies for ingratitude in failing to support Reagan's action: "The failure to cooperate against Libya plants poisonous seeds of disintegration."
>
> The *Times* didn't use that kind of language at the moment when it might have done so more appropriately: When Israel was discovered to have been paying a U.S. citizen for U.S. military secrets. Our European allies are our allies

* One such writer, however, Richard Grenier, agreed with those on the Left who denied that Vidal's article was anti-Semitic. Vidal's hostility to Jews was, he said in his column in the Washington *Times*, rooted in other passions—social snobbery, anti-democratic elitism, and envy. Perhaps. But anti-Semitic ideas are and should be identified as anti-Semitic, no matter what may lie behind them.

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for the purpose of resisting Communism, not terrorism. But the *Times*, one of America's most ardently Zionist newspapers, understands that Israel has its own reasons for desiring to pit the United States against the whole Arab world. So bombs away.

Never mind the ignorance and/or misrepresentation here. Never mind that the Sandinistas—who are so close to the PLO that some of them were trained in PLO camps before the overthrow of Somoza; who still receive help from the PLO today; and who have declared that "the PLO cause is the cause of the Sandinistas"—*are* enemies of Israel. Never mind that the New York *Times*, far from being "ardently Zionist," is by a wide margin editorially more critical of Israel than approving. Sobran will not permit such elementary facts to stand in the way of his theory that the Jews first manipulated Reagan into bombing Libya, and then manipulated the Congress and the media into applauding him for doing so.

As if all this were not enough, Sobran took the occasion of the Pope's visit to a synagogue in Rome earlier this year to dredge up canards against the Jews as a people and Judaism as a religion that had rarely been heard since the Middle Ages (though it is possible that Sobran found them in the writings of such Edwardian Catholics as Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton who seem to play a part for him as mentors in anti-Semitism analogous to the one Henry Adams plays for Vidal):

> Millions of Jews chose to migrate to Christian Europe. They lived there for centuries. If Christians were sometimes hostile to Jews, that worked two ways. Some rabbinical authorities held that it was permissible to cheat and even kill Gentiles. Although the great Jewish theologian Moses Maimonides insisted that it was as wrong to kill a Gentile as a Jew, it seems strange that this should ever have been a matter of controversy, and Maimonides was in some quarters regarded as a heretic.

Again, never mind the ignorance here. Never mind the preposterous lies about rabbinical permission to cheat and kill Gentiles or the suggestion that the most revered Jewish thinker of postbiblical times ("From Moses to Moses," Jews say of him, "none has arisen like Moses") was regarded as a heretic because he considered it wrong for a Jew to kill a Gentile. Never mind the ludicrous moral judgment that (in another passage of the same column) equates Christian "hostility" to Jews—manifested over the centuries in mass expulsions, pogroms, forced conversions, and denial of civil or political rights—with the less than respectful Jewish attitude toward Jesus that prevailed in those same centuries. The point to be stressed is that in this column, although Israel comes in at the beginning and the end, the issue is not Zionism, or rather anti-Zionism, but Jews and Judaism throughout the ages. Anti-Semitism, in other words.

For me personally, as well as for Midge Decter, a difficult problem was posed by the growing but finally inescapable conclusion that anti-Semitism was at work in those Sobran columns. In contrast to Vidal (with whom in general he has, to put it mildly, nothing in common), Sobran did not single us out for attack. On the contrary, in one of the very columns from which I have quoted, he defended us against Vidal's charge of disloyalty to America. Not that this did anything to mitigate his own hostility to Israel; it did not, in fact, even prevent him from playing on the theme of dual loyalty himself: "As their frequently duplicitous behavior shows, the Israelis know very well the difference between their interests and ours. It's Americans who love Israel who don't know it yet." Then he used a column of mine (which he might have noticed gave the lie all by itself to the charge that I consider any and all criticism of Israel to be ipso facto anti-Semitic) to drive the dual-loyalty point home:

> When the Pollard spy story broke, Podhoretz wrote that American Jews had been doubly betrayed—as Americans and as Jews. If so, they have been doubly betrayed again—and again. It's time they stood up for their rights against their unreliable ally.

But if there was no problem by now over how to characterize Sobran's writings about Israel and the Jewish community in general, there was a problem of what to do about it. With the Vidal controversy still raging, it seemed reckless to open up, so to speak, a second front. On the other hand, to let Sobran's pieces go by without protest might only make it seem that while neoconservatives were all too ready to attack anti-Semitism on the Left, we were perfectly content to tolerate it on the Right. It was Midge Decter who hit on the idea of writing a letter to Sobran himself and to send copies to a number of mutual friends and political allies. Her letter was very tough. It opened by accusing Sobran of being "little more than a crude and naked anti-Semite" and it proceeded to document this charge (pretty much along the lines of the foregoing account).

Mutatis mutandis, then, just as members of Vidal's political community had been asked for their reaction to his piece in the *Nation*, so Sobran's political friends were now being asked how they felt about the anti-Semitic sentiments to which he had been giving expression in his column. But there the similarity ends.

In contrast to the Vidal-*Nation* case, none of the clearly anti-Semitic Sobran columns had appeared in *National Review*. In spite of this, the editor of *National Review*, William F. Buckley, Jr., responded to Midge Decter's letter, and to the urgings of nearly all the people to whom it had been sent, by deciding to publish an editorial dissociating the magazine from Sobran on this issue. This editorial, written by Buckley himself with the concur-

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rence of all the other senior editors of *National Review*, affirmed that while his colleagues were sure that Sobran was not in his heart an anti-Semite, anyone who did not really know him "might reasonably conclude that those columns were written by a writer inclined to anti-Semitism. . . . Accordingly, I here dissociate myself and my colleagues from what we view as the obstinate tendentiousness of Joe Sobran's recent columns." Buckley also expressed confidence that Sobran would in the future respect the "welcome" structure of "prevailing taboos concerning Israel and the Jews."

It would be pleasant to report that this was an end of it. Unfortunately, Sobran himself and a number of his other friends and allies sprang to his defense in terms very similar to those used by Vidal and his apologists. They denied that the columns in question were anti-Semitic; they complained that anyone who criticizes Israel is smeared with accusations of anti-Semitism; they charged that the Jewish lobby was trying to silence them; they invoked the First Amendment. One of them even compared me with Jesse Jackson: as Jackson has tried to silence opposition with charges of racism, so I have tried to silence it with charges of anti-Semitism.*

FROM Vidal's political friends on the Left, then, mainly denial, and from the editor of the *Nation*, stonewalling. From Sobran's political friends on the Right, mostly outrage, and from the editor of *National Review*, dissociation and repudiation of anti-Semitism.

What emerges from the contrast between the two cases is further evidence that anti-Semitism has largely if not entirely been banished from its traditional home on the Right, and that today, especially in the guise of anti-Zionism, it is meeting with more and more toleration, and sometimes even approval, on the Left.

Meanwhile liberals and other leftists, including large segments of the American Jewish community, go on refusing to face these immensely important facts. If they should therefore also go on failing to undertake the job of housecleaning that conservatives like Buckley have long been doing within their own political community, the poison of anti-Semitism will continue spreading through the American air, with what consequences no one can foresee.

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* In perhaps the most bizarre—and, from the Jewish point of view, scandalous—turn of events in this entire history, the Washington *Jewish Week* reprinted this article (with the parts about Jesse Jackson cut out). Thus a liberal Jewish editor joined forces with a right-wing extremist in whitewashing two of the vilest anti-Semitic outbursts in forty years and in attacking me for protesting against them —adding the usual lie that "the victims of such attacks by Podhoretz have been many and various, and their only apparent sin has been criticism of Israel and its policies." And this was sought out and reprinted in a Jewish paper!

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Shades of Containment

Steven R. Sturm

To expiate the crimes they all too customarily commit against the Republic, politicians are properly made to suffer one agony or another once they have answered the Final Roll Call. Among such punishments is the obligation to return at intervals to the scenes of their earthly activities and to be made to see at first, if ghostly, hand the remote consequences of what they did and of what they failed to do. What follows is the record of a discussion, after a condign junket of this sort, by the shades of two such men: HARRY S. TRUMAN, *Democrat, President of the United States (1945-53), principal American architect of the policy of "containment" and of the NATO alliance designed for its implementation, and* ROBERT A. TAFT, *Republican, United States Senator (1939-53), steadfast opponent of that policy.*

Taft: What an appalling state of affairs! This NATO business has turned out worse than even I had imagined. It is astonishing that Americans have become so inured to it that they don't recognize the enormous costs of their participation.

Truman: I have the depressing sense I have heard this before, but just what costs do you have in mind?

Taft: First and most important is America's heightened exposure to nuclear attack because of its threadbare nuclear guarantee. We continue to insist that in the event of a successful attack on Europe by the Soviet Union we would take steps that could mean the wholesale nuclear destruction of our cities. *No* interests short of the nation's survival would justify actions that could, even remotely, have such a result; and yet, what a dispassionate reading of the nation's interests would instantly reject, the country firmly embraces, presumably out of nostalgia.

Truman: The dangers are real, but they are justified and not so great as you suggest. I for one have been impressed by the ingenuity—over decades and in all kinds of administrations—with which the nuclear guarantee has been refurbished. In any case, just the possibility of American nuclear retaliation is enough to chill any notions of expansion the Soviets might entertain. Our troops in Europe and the nuclear weapons they deploy keep that possibility alive.

Taft: I am concerned about palpable and unnecessary risks to the nation's physical existence—nothing less—and you take comfort in something as notoriously undependable as another nation's weighing of possibilities, a weighing that might be frantically and wishfully carried out in a moment of desperation. The "ingenuity" you speak of is increasingly contrived and unavailing, and everyone—allies and adversaries alike—recognizes that it is. Everyone, apparently, but the American people. There are simply no measures, even in prospect, that will dependably immunize the United States against a catastrophic nuclear attack in the event of a war in Europe.

Truman: That is too categorical. There are "firebreaks" that would impede the escalation of a war in Europe to the level of general nuclear exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Taft: The only dependable firebreak is the Atlantic. Hopes for establishing and maintaining limits in the course of a nuclear exchange ignore Soviet doctrine, the effects of the destruction of both sides' command-and-control systems, and of course the inevitable uncertainty and misapprehension that attend combat. Such hopes are almost certainly illusory. In any case, the consequences of their disappointment, whether that disappointment is probable or not, would be such that no reliance should be put on them.

Truman: I am a little out of my depth here—as are you—but by attacking Soviet strategic forces we could limit damage to the United States. And the capacity to conduct such attacks is another device for enhancing the plausibility of our nu-

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clear guarantee, since such attacks would not necessarily invite retaliation, with any Soviet weapons that remained, on American cities.

Taft: Should a war in Europe spin out of control, the limitation of damage to the United States in the way you suggest would require forces designed for preemptive attack, which are indistinguishable from forces for a first strike. It would require, that is, much larger nuclear forces than the United States is apt to have, and forces that would in any case be stigmatized—not least by our allies—as destabilizing. In the event, counterforce strikes, especially if they included attacks on Soviet leaders, would mean millions of Soviet casualties. The ability of the Soviets to launch their weapons before the U.S. warheads strike—not to speak of their own preference for attacking preemptively—may mean that limiting damage through counterforce strikes is just not possible. It is certainly not likely enough to justify the sorts of risks we are running on behalf of the Europeans.

Truman: I object to the suggestion that these risks—which, again, I think you overstate—are endured solely out of some kind of philanthropy. I will come back to that. First, let me suggest that the American nuclear commitment can be made more forceful, more believable, through strategic defenses, which. . . .

Taft: Please. These are serious matters, and sobriety should be a precondition for discussing them. Strategic defenses will only elicit more effective, and perhaps larger, offensive forces. Actually, you enthusiasts for the alliance should be gratified that such defenses will not undo the existing strategic relationships and vulnerabilities. If they did, they would dramatize the irreducible differences that geography creates for the security interests of the United States on the one hand and of Europe on the other. What is more, the costs, the *continuing* costs, of such defenses will beggar even a Democrat's imagination. That money might more wisely be spent on conventional forces or, better yet, left in the citizens' pockets.

Truman: A great deal of attention is devoted to NATO's conventional forces in any case, and one aim of doing so, at least on our part, is to reduce the nuclear risks borne by the United States. The current effort to improve conventional forces has been explicitly informed by the fear that the so-called "nuclear threshold" has sunk too low.

Taft: I agree that the United States spends staggering sums of money on conventional forces for Europe—much too much. But despite its periodic agitations about the conventional balance, NATO has not succeeded in reducing the nuclear exposure of the United States. Bear in mind that many in Europe regard it as precisely in their interest to maintain America's nuclear jeopardy—a belief amply reflected in their invariably half-hearted responses to U.S. initiatives for a stronger conventional defense. The current effort will be no different. Here NATO is launched on a program allegedly meant to correct what it, with unusual candor, calls "critical deficiencies," and some of the allies, including the United Kingdom, may actually *cut* their defense budgets; many of the others are retrenching in one deceptive fashion or another; and no one seems to have the required increases in mind. There is, in fact, no reason to believe that the conventional balance will not be worse in five or ten years than it is now. The Soviets seem never to be content, and will hardly be passive while we correct the balance—even if the present effort promised any such thing, and of course it does not.

Truman: The balance in Europe is a notoriously difficult thing to assess. It needs to be bolstered, I agree, but it is not irremediable. One can at least say that in this period of economic problems (for ourselves as well as for the Europeans), NATO's current program will produce a situation that will be better than would otherwise have existed.

Taft: That, I am afraid, is a trip to Cold Comfort Farm, because whatever "situation" emerges will not be good enough. NATO, sporting patently inadequate conventional defenses, can barely be induced to depart, even fractionally, from its tedious and feckless procedures. All the while, the dangers to the United States stemming from our quixotic and ill-appreciated guarantee are going to increase. They will increase because our own defense budgets are, quite properly, going to fall, which will give comfort to those allies—most of them—inclined to reduce their own defense spending. The dangers are going to get worse because of the predictable improvements that will take place in Soviet strategic and theater nuclear forces, improvements that may encourage the abandonment of land-based strategic forces in the United States and thus further undermine any possibility for the selective and limited use of nuclear weapons. And they are going to get worse because of the ingrained allied distaste for the modernization of the alliance's nuclear forces.

It is distressing that the real and growing risks that the United States runs on Europe's behalf are not understood by the American public. Were it aware of the dangers to which it is exposed, the public, I believe, would repudiate the arrangements that entail them. Those arrangements, which may *just* have been defensible thirty-five years ago when the United States had an unmistakable nuclear advantage, are—in the existing strategic circumstances—a profound liability.

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Truman: The American people are not so unaware as you imply. The consistency of U.S. policy toward NATO, broadly conceived, testifies to the American people's recognition of the importance to the United States of Europe's security.

Taft: What is important to America is America's security. This is not less true because arrangements and commitments made decades ago, in a radically different world, have been allowed to harden into orthodoxy and to collect the usual array of unimaginative officials solicitous of the institutions and presumptions on which their careers are based. But perhaps I have been a little unfair to my compatriots. It is naturally difficult to sustain interest in a matter as arcane and even repellent as nuclear strategy. But there are other costs due to our involvement in NATO that Americans should be better able to count.

Truman: The costs of the forces themselves? Is it time to put on our green eyeshades?

Taft: The costs of the forces in and for Europe are important and worth discussing, but more important is the way membership in NATO deprives the United States of the flexibility and freedom a superpower requires. Why does no one weary of the incessant demands for consultations, which preclude the rapidity and the discretion—frankly, the secrecy and sometimes the brutality—that effective international action requires? The consultations over arms-control negotiations are a case in point. Designing positions that serve U.S. purposes is hopelessly complicated by the need to protect European interests.

Truman: The interests of the allies are naturally involved in many of the actions of the United States, and it is only to be expected that the allies would seek to keep themselves informed and to influence U.S. policy to the extent that they can, which, after all, is not very much. Consultations are a trivial price to pay for allied confidence and unity.

Taft: Unity? In NATO, unity is achieved by agreeing to do as little as possible. It has apparently become impossible to obtain allied agreement to genuinely effective action. The doomed—please forgive the expression—quest for agreement only compromises the significance of the action the United States finally takes. Measures taken promptly and unequivocally would have far greater weight than the same ones taken after a dispiriting, embarrassing, and finally unsuccessful appeal for allied participation. Consider our effort to get agreement to impose sanctions on Libya. Libya exports murder—the murder of Europeans as well as Americans—the way other nations export ground nuts or fava beans, and yet it is all the United States can do to induce its allies not to rush in behind it for a little tawdry business.

Truman: Consultations are frequently very useful. They oblige those who take part in them to explain their policies and to submit them to the discipline of examination. They also allow those with wisdom enough to profit from their allies' counsel to obtain it. We should perhaps be quietly thankful that the allies' caution has occasionally dampened some of the erratic, short-lived impulses to which U.S. foreign policy seems peculiarly subject. The skepticism of many Europeans about sanctions against Libya may, for example, be perfectly sensible; it is not as if the nations of Europe have no experience with terrorism, or with North Africa for that matter.

Taft: The fruit of the allies' vaunted experience will normally be to propose a study. You certainly do not mean to suggest that the United States, with its unique responsibilities, should take instruction from, say, Greece or Denmark? The clarity of U.S. positions is obscured by the pretense of taking seriously the views of nations like these, whose commitment to allegedly common purposes becomes every day more uncertain.

Truman: It is grotesquely unfair to suggest that the behavior of Greece or Denmark is typical. I am not saying that multilateral diplomacy is without its frustrations or that nations will not at times take advantage of the institutions and procedures such diplomacy demands. I believe, indeed, that the United States has occasionally done so. You referred earlier to the "weight" of our actions; perhaps the choice is between independence of action in particular cases and influence in general. The United States would almost certainly have less of the latter if it had to approach the countries of Europe individually and to do so without the ability to invoke collective undertakings, carefully arrived at. I agree that the prerequisites for useful multilateral diplomacy do not always exist: the United Nations, I regret to say, comes immediately to mind. But those preconditions—particularly, shared democratic values—certainly do exist in the case of the nations of the North Atlantic. Disagreements over peripheral matters or over means should not be allowed to obscure those nations' common recognition of the threat both to their security and to those shared values, or their willingness, even through years of peace, to concert their responses to that threat.

Taft: Their willingness to make the appropriate responses to the threat posed by the Soviet Union is not by any means clear; and neither, accordingly, is it clear that they have subscribed to a common assessment of that threat. On the contrary, the United States—with the least at stake—is unfailingly the most alarmed about the military bal-

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ance. And before this discussion departs for the sunny uplands of "democratic values," let's be clear about the hindrances to effective diplomatic action that NATO creates for the United States. These impediments to autonomous action are great, and they will increase. Parties unsympathetic to NATO and even to the United States are in the wings in Britain, Germany, and other nations. The habits of qualifying one's membership in the alliance and of picking and choosing from among ostensibly shared burdens seem now fully established. And finally, economic difficulties, so regularly adduced to justify one brand of irresponsibility or another, will make the European members of the alliance even more timid, more captious and peevish, in response to calls for action.

Truman: Their economic problems are real. You yourself were once insistent that solvency was a condition of national security.

Taft: So it is, but our European friends are not choosing between security and solvency; they are choosing between security and self-indulgence, and the security they have elected to slight is ours as well as their own. Solvency is very much at stake for the United States, however. The preparations the United States makes to defend Western Europe are an enormous financial burden, a burden we continue meekly to bear decades after the people we propose to defend have acquired the economic strength to defend themselves. As evidenced by the portion of their gross national product they devote to defense, the European nations have simply decided they will not make the necessary sacrifices. Measured in this thoroughly reasonable way, the onus borne by Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Norway is only half—sometimes less—that accepted by the United States; and the burden, if it may be called that, carried by Canada and Denmark is a third—a third!—that of the United States. Why should the United States bankrupt itself under these circumstances? If the United States did not have to plan on defending and resupplying Europe in the event of a war, it could, by one estimate, reduce its ground, air, and naval forces so much that it would save over $2 trillion in the first decade alone.

Truman: It can be unfair to cite defense expenditures as a fraction of GNP, particularly if one considers only the figures for the last several years. These have been years in which the United States has tried to make up for the neglect of its forces during much of the 70's, a period when the allies were quietly doing their share and more—when their defense budgets, unlike ours, were increasing steadily. Starting in 1971, their defense budgets, taken together, have grown by about 30 percent, that of the United States by only about 12 percent. In any case, the allies contribute to the common security in ways that all these numbers obscure. Many conscript their soldiers, for example, and so pay much less in personnel costs than we do. The Germans point out, furthermore, that they provide the battlefield. . . .

Taft: Only a contemporary European would have the crust to make an argument like that. American soldiers will die defending *German* soil and do so in thrall to a thoroughly impractical strategy of linear defense—and this is a circumstance that is supposed to occasion gratitude on our part.

Even taking account of these sophistries, the Europeans do not make an effort that is great enough to be really effective, and they never have. In the 70's—when, on your account, the allies were being so dutiful—the portion of their total wealth they devoted to defense was always less than that of the United States. And there is certainly no likelihood that they will do enough in the future. As a result, despite our costly and unending exertions, a successful conventional defense seems to be out of the question: there is no room for maneuver—indeed, given this utterly unmilitary business of forward defense, there is no desire for it; the weakness of some sectors acts as a positive invitation to attack; NATO's supply lines are vulnerable, thanks in part to uncertainties about the role of the French; the equipment the United States has stockpiled in Europe in huge (and expensive) amounts represents so many irresistible targets; and at the same time the United States plans—*if* it is given the time—to resupply Europe in the teeth of the Soviet navy, when in World War II it was all we could do to defeat the dramatically smaller and less capable force of German submarines. It is no wonder that, despite the efforts the United States has made for years, NATO's military leaders now warn that they would have to request the use of nuclear weapons early in a war—with all that that implies for the physical survival of the United States.

Truman: It is in part just such warnings that have led the members of the alliance to renew the pledge to increase their defense budgets each year by 3 percent over and above inflation.

Taft: Ah, the celebrated 3-percent formula. I have already pointed out that in this spirited campaign to improve conventional defenses, several nations—and not the least important—may actually reduce their defense budgets. But there is more to be said about the 3-percent goal. It may, in fact, be the clearest case of the way in which sterile rituals have come to replace action at NATO. The United States runs after its allies, in the usual slightly degrading way, urging them to promise to do what their own security requires. And when they finally agree—without much grace, but with any number of conditions—we

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triumphantly offer the renewal of the goal as evidence that the allies will do their share. We do this even though we know perfectly well—indeed, almost as well as the allies themselves do—that most of them have not the slightest intention of coming anywhere close to that figure. (I naturally exempt the Greeks and the Turks from this charge; they are arming steadily, although, of course, mainly against each other.) The whole 3-percent business is the emptiest sort of empty formalism. Actually, it is worse than that, since it is misleading.

Truman: European defense budgets, like our own, are always under attack, sometimes for good reasons. Along with all the other forces that affect those budgets in one way or another, the 3-percent goal exerts a helpful upward pressure, even if it is not decisive. Keep in mind that the allies' military contributions are substantial and therefore expensive. Ours are as well, of course, but there is a lot at stake: the United States pays its share to secure important interests.

Taft: The United States pays those costs because the Europeans won't. The purposes ostensibly served by the U.S. involvement do not, as far as I can tell, require that involvement and are in some ways actually jeopardized by it. Western Europe, after all, could by itself mount a defense at least as effective as the existing one. Its population, economic potential, and combined military manpower are as great as or greater than those of the Soviet Union and its allies. Even its military technology is roughly comparable; it would be entirely competitive were the Europeans to cooperate. And Western Europe's military tasks are in some ways easier than those facing the Soviet Union, which has to contend with the waywardness of the Poles, not to say the hostility of the Chinese.

Truman: Our allies have come to rely on us.

Taft: They have indeed; they have become, in fact, dependencies. A sense of dependency is always demoralizing, and it has permitted—even encouraged—the allies to abdicate their responsibilities for their own defense. The withdrawal of the United States would be sobering.

Truman: At last, the word—"withdrawal." Is that the alternative to the present situation?

Taft: Any steps that reduced the exposure of the United States, increased its freedom of action, or reduced its financial burden would be welcome. But U.S.-NATO relations can be construed as a history of half-measures in the form of increasingly contrived theories and oversold programs, none of which has been relevant. Relevant, I mean, to a strategic reality in which the United States cannot safely commit itself to Europe's defense and to an economic reality in which it does not need to and cannot afford to.

Truman: I do not believe you understand the implications of the withdrawal you advocate. You have a minute and, in fact, exaggerated appreciation of the costs of our involvement in NATO but evidently no sense of the consequences of disengagement. History certainly has something to say about the importance of the U.S. role in Europe. The country had to have brought home to it twice in this century that it could not tolerate the domination of Europe by a power hostile to it. For the United States, the second lesson was even more expensive than the first. Could we bear the cost of a third? Surely it would be wiser, not to say cheaper, to remain involved and in that way to discourage yet another disaster, which we might next time be too tardy and perhaps too weak to undo.

NATO (with, I regret to say, the Warsaw Pact) constitutes a stable solution to the problem of how to order power in Central Europe: a solution, if you like, to the German problem. The stability imposed by these blocs has actually been quite impressive—particularly when compared with the forty years that preceded their formation. A war in Europe is highly unlikely, and the escalation of such an event into a nuclear exchange between the superpowers is more remote still. This is not an argument for complacency, but a plea for caution in tampering with arrangements that, for all their inconveniences and frustrations, work in this crucial respect.

Taft: The "German problem"? This is 1986, not 1886. Nuclear weapons have levied their own demands, more exigent than the lessons of your dubious and in any case now passé diplomatic history. It is true that in two world wars the United States lacked the power to prevent, independently, a development that threatened important interests. We required the assistance of certain European nations to safeguard those interests. That is no longer true. In this context, nuclear weapons mean two things: the United States does not need the Europeans' aid, and it cannot risk the Europeans' embrace. Our disagreement evidently turns in part on different views of how robust, of how stable, the present relationship of mutual deterrence is. But even if I thought it was very stable, as you apparently do, I would be afraid it might not remain so. Besides, assessing a risk means not only predicting the likelihood of some unwelcome event but setting that likelihood against its consequences should it occur. Rather than conducting such an analysis, the United States merely accepts the risks of its NATO membership out of sentimentality and inertia. Absent those things, an unprejudiced recalculation of U.S. interests might be possible.

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Truman: But consider, on your own argument, the risks of withdrawing from NATO—or of severely curtailing our involvement in some way. The consequences might well include, at a minimum, preponderant Soviet influence over Western Europe: control, in one form or another, to one degree or another, over the region's population, industry, natural resources, and technological capacity. In the worst case, the departure of the United States might even lead, through some unpredictable sequence of events, to actual Soviet occupation of the continent. I believe the balance is stable; I do not believe it is indestructible.

You inveigh against the Europeans as if it were Western Europe and not the Soviet Union that menaces us. Certainly, some of the Europeans, some of the time, are irresponsible and myopic, but we are hardly in a position to judge failings of that kind too harshly. What is much more important is that the allies, unlike some of their critics, have never lost sight of the overriding strategic problem confronting them *and* the United States: the great military power at the service of a regime profoundly, and in fact constitutionally, contemptuous of Western purposes and ideals. One measure of their steady recognition of that problem is the military forces they deploy because of it. You have unfairly belittled those forces; taken together, they are huge, well-trained, and impressively armed. For us, they are indispensable and their loss would be catastrophic. Remember that in the event of a war in Europe, most of the Western forces—the men, the planes, the tanks—would be European.

Taft: You say that as though it were remarkable, as though someone other than the Europeans might be expected to supply most of the means for the defense of what is, after all, Europe.

Truman: Means for the defense of shared interests. I began a moment ago to describe some of the ways in which the allies contribute to that defense, contributions that cannot be measured like numbers of divisions or figures in a defense budget but that are nevertheless crucial. One such contribution is geography. Our bases in Europe permit actions of one sort or another in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf that might not otherwise be possible. But the mere proximity of the allies to the peoples of Eastern Europe may be even more important. The appalling "celebrations" of the Berlin Wall that were recently orchestrated by the East German government testified—grotesquely but powerfully—to its sense of the dangers posed to its control, and to the control of its patron, by the simple existence so close to it of free Western societies.

Taft: The path that the American aircraft attacking Libya were forced to fly testified—"grotesquely but powerfully"—to the value of the allies when fighting outside of Europe is demanded. You are assuming in any event that all the advantages that the Europeans bring to our strategic competition with the Soviet Union would necessarily be lost if we were to withdraw. You are assuming that the Europeans would offer no defense against either Soviet political pressure or an outright invasion. This fear of an accommodation that goes so far that some independence is lost—"Finlandization," I believe, is the unpleasant shorthand—may be just with respect to Finland, but it is certainly unfair when applied to, say, Germany or France: large, industrialized, self-confident countries with impressive armed forces.

Truman: At one moment there is no prospect of NATO's defending itself even if the United States participates fully; in the next, you argue that Europe, although no doubt shocked and demoralized by a U.S. withdrawal, will by itself be able to resist a country of undeniably great power, and one celebrated for its opportunism. Defense—whether against the actual use of force or against demands made in its intimidating presence—is not simply a matter of physical means; it also depends on a belief that success is possible, and this is a belief that the departure of the United States might easily shatter.

Taft: Now it is you who are guilty of overstating the risks. In any case, it is not obvious that all important U.S. interests would be compromised even if the Europeans were unable or unprepared to mount a satisfactory defense. A Europe under Soviet influence would, for example, still trade with the United States.

Truman: Is a tradesman's outlook supposed to guide U.S. foreign policy? Even if one could depend on it, an assurance of continued trade is hardly an adequate basis for momentous decisions by a great power. It is not even dignified. What will be happening at the more important strategic level while this trade persists? What is the final resting place of a policy of withdrawal—a policy, really, of retreat? The Persian Gulf is more important to the nations of Europe than to the United States itself. Having detached itself from NATO, the United States would have little reason to be interested in Southwest Asia—even if its withdrawal from Europe had not deprived it of the facilities necessary for action in the Gulf.

Taft: Quite right.

Truman: Perhaps the United States could find a role—and friends in what would suddenly be a more hostile world—by turning to the Pacific? The country could draw comfort in that case from its Pacific allies: from the military power of Singapore, the fidelity of New Zealand, the stability of

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the Philippines, and the democratic traditions of South Korea. Of course, these countries might discover they had few incentives for allying themselves with a declining United States. Even in parts of the Pacific, what is more, the Soviet Union could pose the same dangers for the United States that would have driven it from Europe.

Taft: Although I would not rule out selective and temporary alliances, as conditions required, I essentially agree: the ultimate consequence of a repudiation of our membership in NATO might be —and perhaps should be—a devotion to the defense of the United States proper, with at most some care for what happens in the hemisphere.

Truman: You must have thrilled to George McGovern's call, "Come Home, America!" I naturally exclude you from this stricture, but there is sometimes a curious community of views on this question between the irresponsible Left and the irresponsible Right. In any case, where do your prescriptions finally carry us? To a situation, it seems to me, in which we have abandoned—or, in any event, left at hazard—the ties that sustain the nation's economy, nourish its mind, and confirm its principles. To a world across most of which Soviet power can move with ease. To a world that is for us, therefore, increasingly cheerless and dire. It is not at all clear that in these circumstances the country could prudently reduce its forces. The armed services would be imaginative in elaborating reasons why, although no longer obliged to help defend Europe, they needed the same or larger budgets and, oddly enough, much the same array of units. And forced to contemplate the possibility of a war without allies, they might be entirely right. None of this has the makings of a geopolitical triumph. But I believe the idea of withdrawal is defective not only on strategic grounds but also on philosophical ones.

Taft: I was sure it would come to this. You are about to sink to the argument that alliances with democratic countries are a value in and of themselves and so must be maintained at any cost.

Truman: Not at all. Alliances are instruments and must, as such, meet appropriate tests of utility. But democracy is a value in itself, one that NATO serves. And not democracy alone. Democracy is one characteristic among others that together define a rare kind of society: tolerant, open, and self-critical, subject to law, and graced, if I may use that expression, with representative government. Such societies are not so common or, on recent evidence, so well adapted to the world's usual violence and deprivation that the fate of one democracy can be a matter of indifference to another. It certainly seems unlikely to me that, were the United States to become the only important society of this kind, it could hope to endure in that form for long. We would find it very difficult to maintain an open society under what would be—or would at any rate appear to be—conditions of constant and ubiquitous menace.

Your ostentatiously hard-headed indictment of NATO on geopolitical grounds fails, as I have said, on precisely those grounds. But it fails in this more important way—by neglecting the significance of the other members of the alliance for the preservation of the values that constitute the American polity. Surely a concern for what is fundamental to the character of the nation is the severest sort of self-interest. Proposals for withdrawal overlook the importance today of political and social philosophies—of ideologies. The end, since World War II, of the practice of "selective and temporary alliances," as you put it, testifies to the crucial contemporary role of ideology, a role which precludes the closest relationships between some nations and all but requires them between others. It surprises me that you have ignored this.

Taft: The last person I heard give a speech that was at once so solemn and so misguided was Adlai Stevenson. I should not have to remind you that the United States was a democracy for over a century without being involved in European affairs—at a time when Europe, which somehow now provides, in your view, an indispensable democratic example, was awash in a genetically shallow pool of kings, czarinas, archdukes—that whole ghastly, antiquated, class-ridden monument to parasitism. What you have also forgotten . . .

NOTE BY RECORDING SECRETARY: *The spirits of Messrs. Taft and Truman had evidently fulfilled their obligations at this point, for they suddenly began to shimmer and then to evanesce. They lingered only long enough to answer a hurried question about what title might be given to their discussion. Mr. Taft said that, while he did not wish to be indebted in any way to that "ineffable fellow-traveler, Lillian Hellman," as NATO was the topic the title would have to be "Botch on the Rhine." Mr. Truman thought that suggestion vulgar and, as he disappeared, proposed instead, "All's Well That Spends Well."*

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"And That's What I Like About the South"

Joseph Epstein

A BRIEF cautionary tale for those who do not believe in fate. In my twenty-second year, in the middle of a two-year hitch as a draftee in the peacetime U.S. Army, I was informed by a lean and gruff staff sergeant at Fort Hood, Texas, that I had qualified to work as a clerk-typist at a recruiting station in either Little Rock, Arkansas, or Shreveport, Louisiana, and was asked which of the two towns I preferred. I reckoned I had roughly ten seconds to make up my mind. I recall thinking that Shreveport, being in Louisiana, probably had the better food, and I knew that it had something of a reputation for being a wide-open town; yet Little Rock was a few hundred miles closer to Chicago, where I was from.

"Little Rock, Sergeant," I said, permitting propinquity to win out over profligacy. Before the next year was out I had met and married the woman who is the mother of my two sons; and I had published my first piece of writing, which settled me in my determination to become a writer. From those three words—"Little Rock, Sergeant" —marriage, family, and vocation followed. I have no complaints about any of this, but even today I cannot keep from wondering what my life would have been like if I had said, "Shreveport, Sergeant."

On the south side of Chicago there is a restaurant named Febo's over whose bar is the slogan, "Febo's, Famous for Nothing." Three years before I arrived there—the year of my arrival was 1959—one might have said the same about Little Rock. The only fact I could have cited about the city, apart from its being the state capital, was that it was the birthplace of Brooks Robinson, the great third-baseman of the Baltimore Orioles. But by 1959 the city had already become famous—infamous, to be more precise—for the forced integration of its Central High School, which was accomplished in 1957 only with the aid of federal troops called in by President Eisenhower.

In the autumn of 1957, in fact, as a senior in college, I along with a friend had driven through Little Rock on a trip around the South. I remembered the city as being hilly; I also remembered a rather overweight young National Guardsman leaning on his rifle and dozing off while standing guard on the lawn of Central High. From that perspective the crisis did not seem much of a crisis. But the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, considerable though its consequences were for the nation at large, was easily the most decisive event in the history of the city—and, as I discovered on a brief recent trip to Little Rock, made after an absence of roughly twenty years, it remains the decisive event.

Although I had stayed awake the better part of the night during the Trailways bus ride from Killeen, Texas, crowded in my seat near the window next to a heavy-set woman smelling of talcum powder and sachet who was reading Christian Science literature, I nevertheless arrived in Little Rock feeling exhilarated. After the sere flatness of central Texas, the green undulating landscape of Arkansas raised the spirits. There was the additional inspiriting fact that, owing to there being no Army base near Little Rock, I would be able to live in an apartment by myself. This was no small luxury after spending the past eight months sleeping in the same room with some two hundred men, listening to them snoring, belching, sneezing, wheezing, flatulating, occasionally crying out in their sleep for mother, and otherwise producing a cacophony that might have been as music to the ears of John Cage but was distinctly not my notion of ideally restful conditions. The Army is a total environment, from which, morning to night, one never escapes, except in sleep or in the recesses of the imagination. In coming to Little Rock, where I would presumably work only a regular day, but no more, with my evenings and weekends free, I was escaping this total environment. Arriving in Little Rock, I felt the exquisite delight of someone who senses he has really gotten away with something.

I checked my duffel bag at the bus station, bought a newspaper, and two hours later had my apartment. It was a studio with a minuscule kitchen and a private bathroom (a private bath—"Aladdinish!" as Theodore Dreiser might have put it). Containing a double bed that rolled out of a closet, two pieces of a battered gray sectional couch, two wooden chairs and a small table at

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which to eat, and another table that I could use as a desk, it was a simple enough dwelling but, hallelujah, mine own.

My apartment was at the south end of Louisiana Street, fourteen blocks from the recruiting station in downtown Little Rock where I was to work, and across the street from the eastern end of the governor's mansion, whose current occupant was the redneck populist Orval Faubus. A block away was a Safeway supermarket, where I bought a few dishes, a single service of aluminum flatware, glasses, a coffee cup, a kitchen knife, a pot, a frying pan, a kettle for boiling water, a can opener, four cans of Campbell's Soup, some packaged cold-cuts, a white bread, a dozen eggs, a jar of instant coffee, a carton of orange juice, and a $3.98 West Bend alarm clock. Apart from the alarm clock, the only appliance in the apartment was a small Olivetti portable typewriter that I had bought for $35 from a sergeant at Fort Hood who needed the money to pay for a ring job on his car. The apartment had no television set, no radio, no phonograph, no air-conditioner, no fan, nothing on the walls; it did have venetian blinds. I never had enough extra money to install a telephone, but there was a pay phone half a block away on the corner of Main and 17th Street. Simple Southern living; I, at least, would never live so simply again. After living on Army bases, I felt I had it knocked—absolutely made in the shade.

Little Rock was a city of fewer than 200,000 people and the U.S. Army recruiting station occupied a three-story, fake-Romanesque former bank building on Main Street near the center of downtown. I worked on the mezzanine, with three other enlisted men and a spinster civil servant who wore her gray hair in braids pinned atop her head and who regularly invited me, a heathen Israelite, to join her for services at her fundamentalist church. The first floor was given over to administrative functions; on the third floor, medical examinations were done. I typed the results of the physicals. These results could sometimes be rather startling. Boys who had been recruited from towns in the fastnesses of the Ozarks, or in the back country, where there were no medical services, would, on being examined, be revealed to have punctured eardrums, or hopelessly rotted teeth, or venereal disease, or incipient tuberculosis. The minimal weight limit for getting into service was then, I believe, 106 pounds, and some couldn't make it, so that the sergeants who recruited them would take them out and fill them with ice cream, bananas, and beer and bring them back to have them reweighed. Recruiting sergeants working out in the field had strict quotas; if they did not fill them they lost their jobs, which they did not want to do since recruiting was regarded as light duty.

But it could not have been any lighter duty than mine. I worked for a gentle and good-natured sergeant named Wilson Duncan, who was a drinking man of the kind known as a bibbler. He would duck out from time to time during the day for a few belts, returning with his spirits and good humor refreshed. We were overstaffed. We reported for work at 8:00 and rarely had any typing to do after 3:00. Fairly often, after spending an entire weekend alone in my apartment without speaking to anyone, on a Monday morning at 10:00, Sergeant Duncan would say, "We got things pretty much under control here, kid. Why don't you knock off for the day?" We typists all did a lot of knocking off.

I had enormous amounts of time to myself, more than I have ever had in my life. I filled it, insofar as possible, with reading. I was a big customer at the Little Rock Public Library, which was on Louisiana Street between the recruiting station and my apartment. A magazine and tobacco store downtown carried such magazines as the *New Statesman*, the *Spectator*, *Encounter*, the *New Leader*, and the *Economist*, and I was a regular there, too. (I was already a subscriber to Commentary, *Partisan Review*, and *Dissent*.) On steamy Southern days I would sit in my apartment, with no shirt on, reading away for three- and four-hour stretches—four hours was about my limit. I would punctuate these reading sessions with walks. At one point I bought a basketball, which I would dribble over to a schoolyard three blocks away, there to shoot a hundred free throws, then return to read Sidney Hook's *The Hero in History*, F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition*, or a Balzac novel. Days would go by in which I spoke to no one.

Nights, when there was no movie in town I cared to see, I would walk down to the empty lot on 17th and Main Street where, most weeks, traveling revivalists and faith healers set up their tents. The evangelist would usually arrive on Monday, often driving a Cadillac with the extravagant tail fins of the late 1950's and followed by a huge truck which contained the large tent, the folding chairs, the organ, and the sound system that were the tools of his trade. By Tuesday he would be in business. I could hear the music from my apartment. It would begin with gentle hymns, such as "By and By We're Going Up to See the King," and build to the driving rhythms of "We're Tentin' Tonight." The audience for these shows were poor and rural folk: the women often swollen by a starch-laden diet, the men often missing a few fingers, many teeth, and wearing farm overalls. A segregated section was set off to the side for Negroes. There was never a shortage of crippled and elderly. An atmosphere of the carnival freak show suffused everything, at least for me, who stood on the edge of the tent, taking it in.

These performances built to a crescendo. Much

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chatter about the wonder-working power of Jesus Christ was interspersed with hymns blasted out on high-powered organs. The evangelist would wing it, his accounts of heaven and hell being interspersed with cries to the Lord—"Can you hear me, Jesus?" "Do you know we love you, Jesus?" "Oh, blood of the lamb!"—followed by enthusiastic amens. After an hour or so of this foreplay, the screws were applied. The evangelist knew, oh yes he knew, there were people here tonight who needed to be saved, who had not yet come to Jesus, but would do so tonight, amen. "Won't you come forth, won't you meet with Jesus now?" he would whisper into the public-address system. Sometimes parents would bring their children forward to the stage, or wives their husbands. "I love you, Jesus," some among them would call out. Some would writhe with ecstasy, or faint dead away. Those who were saved were led off to a smaller tent toward the side of the lot, there to fill out a card giving evidence of their salvation on that night and to be assigned to one or another of Little Rock's many fundamentalist churches; there, too, I do not doubt, they were hit up for money.

The wildest of these shows were of course those put on by the faith healers, who would tell people that if they came to Jesus they could throw away their crutches, slip off their braces, shake free of their arthritis; their boils, tumors, and cancers would fall away. "Oh, thank you, Jesus thank you, Jesus," the evangelist would yawp, not wishing to take for himself the credit for miraculous cures. "Do you love him? Can you feel him here with us tonight?" Organ music full blast: "Oh, we're tentin' tonight, oh, we're tentin' tonight, tentin' on the old camp grounds." "My assistants will pass among you. Give what you can to continue the work of the Lord, the Father and the Son. Give all that you can."

It was the purest Elmer Gantry. I had read the novel, seen the movie, and now night after night watched the real thing from which both were drawn—and somehow never grew tired of it. Watching it I felt a combination of pity, revulsion, and sheer admiration of craft. I became a connoisseur of these performances, a student of the methods of the laying on of hands, of the babbling in strange tongues, of the hitting up for cash at the precise right moment. Once, as I stood at my usual place outside the open tent, a fleshy woman in a house dress, pale and with thinning hair, emerged from the tent to address me. "Won't you join us?" she asked, in a treacly voice. "You know he died for you." Speechless, I turned away, a shiver running through my body, and did not return for the remainder of that week.

I YEARNED for company, but the kind of company I required was not available. Somehow, during the last four or five years, I had crossed the line and become a member of what I think of as the "bookish class." This had both its advantages and its disadvantages. Among its advantages, it meant that I could defy Pascal, who said that man's problems began with his inability to sit quietly by himself in a room, by being able, in fact, to sit very quietly in a room, with time out every so often for a hundred free throws, at least so long as I had a book or magazine to read. Among its disadvantages was that I now found myself a little bored after a few hours in the company of people who were not interested in the rather specialized things that I was interested in: books, ideas, writing, art.

During the week I went to lunch with the young men I worked with at the recruiting station: an airman from Alabama who was recently married; a Marine sergeant named Jackie Taylor the story of whose life was the alimony and child-support payments he had to send monthly to his former wife back in Texas; a landscape architect from Cleveland who sent out signals to me that he was secretly a homosexual; two fellows who helped administer physicals, one from Baltimore and another from Columbus, Ohio, both of whom had battled their way through college without, I think it fair to say, education ever having laid a glove on them. This sounds suspiciously like intellectual snobbery, though I prefer to think it factual reporting. We all got on well enough; it was merely that I sensed, and sensed that they sensed, that there was no place for our friendships to go—except, every so often, for a couple of beers after work.

I must have seemed, to put it very gently, more than a little strange to them: a lone Jew, a young man who brought books to read during coffee breaks, someone who had strong opinions on integration (very much for it), and who in winter took to wearing a dark gray Brooks Brothers tweed overcoat over his uniform until told, gently, by Sergeant Duncan that in wearing that coat he was out of uniform. I must also have seemed a bit dreamy, which I began to be, for all the reading I had been doing led me to believe that I could write. It was in the Army in Little Rock that, for the first time, I felt the palpable excitement of writing—the sensuousness of it, the feeling of power and control that came with knowing how sentences worked. Before, I had felt vaguely, inchoately, that I might someday like to write; now I felt the day had come in earnest.

My reading, now that it had a specific motive, became all the more passionate. Whereas, before, I asked about everything I read, What does the author mean?, I now asked as well, How does he do it? Words inflamed me. "Eschew," "deliquescent," "amanuensis," I wished to compose sentences into which such words could be fitted. I would study sentences in writers I admired to understand their architecture. Elegance for me was available only within the frame of prose. I discovered the use of the dash—a banner day. The

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subtlety of the semicolon was at last revealed to me; I was delighted by its magical power of demonstrating connectedness. I lived in a state of nearly perpetual interior excitation, which could be shared with no one. I was in verbal heat.

I began working off some of this heat by writing letters to the editor of the Arkansas *Gazette*, a newspaper which, the year before, had won a Pulitzer Prize for its editorial coverage of the crisis over the integration of Central High School. These letters, moralistic and no doubt very pompous, were duly printed and went duly unnoticed. I have to strain to remember what they were about: no doubt they pointed up contradictions in *Gazette* editorials, or satirized the statements of segregationist politicians, or remarked upon the behavior of foreign regimes (about which everything I knew I had myself read in the *Economist*). When I took to dropping off these letters in person at the newspaper, I was instructed to take them up to Mr. Neil, who worked on the editorial page and was responsible for the correspondence column.

A few years later Jerry Neil, who had become my friend, told me how he viewed his work as the lead editorial writer on the the Arkansas *Gazette*. "I drop off my wife at her job," he said, "and get into the office by eight. I spend the first part of the morning telling General de Gaulle or Harold Macmillan or some other European head of state to get his act together. I next accuse Lyndon Johnson of chicanery, or remind Faubus what a blockhead he is. Then I break for lunch, at which I manage to stay just sober enough to be able to return to the office to paste up letters before knocking off for the day. It's a pretty good racket."

Jerry Neil was one of those superior Southerners—not a fake Southern aristocrat, or the son of a wealthy family who went off to Princeton or Yale and remained an Ivy Leaguer for life, but a bright young man who, after going to the state university, marched off to Europe for World War II and returned able to participate in the wider culture of the world while never forgetting his origins. He had read widely in European history and English literature. He admired Max Beerbohm, H.L. Mencken, and A.J. Liebling. He had the old-fashioned journalist's love of oddity of character and appetite for a comic anecdote. His laugh, which it was always such a pleasure to be able to evoke, resembled the exhale of a snore. He dressed with refinement and thought the same way.

Why the heavy drinking? I do not know for certain, but I suspect that Jerry Neil was a disappointed man. As an editorialist on the Arkansas *Gazette*, he had done a good deal of the work for which the paper's editor, Harry Ashmore, had been given the credit. He had been offered other jobs on other papers—the New York *Herald-Tribune*, I seem to recall, and also the *Wall Street Journal*—but for his own private reasons turned them down. Perhaps he regretted this; perhaps he felt he lacked the nerve to try himself in the larger world. Harry Ashmore had left the Arkansas *Gazette* to join Robert Hutchins at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, there to get somehow lost in the great dialogue. Another bright young writer named William Whitworth left the Arkansas *Gazette* to go to work for the *New Yorker* and eventually to wind up as editor of the *Atlantic*. But Jerry stayed on, pasting up those letters through an alcoholic haze until his death, at age fifty-eight, in the late 1970's. I do not know what he saw in me, but even now I am glad that he saw something.

IT WAS to Jerry Neil that I ran with one of my two contributor's copies of my first published magazine article, a report on Little Rock that appeared in the *New Leader*. "Nice piece," he said, looking up as he finished reading it. He was no doubt being charitable. It was a composition modeled on those travel pieces that James (not yet Jan) Morris used to write for *Encounter*, anecdotal and heavy on impressions. I cannot locate a copy of it today, but my recollection is that it was vastly overwritten. I seem to recall a number of its sentences beginning with the phrase, "In any event"; "at any rate" also got a pretty good workout. I had no illusions that the *New Leader* was a great magazine, but I was nonetheless thrilled to be published in the same journal that also published Sidney Hook, Reinhold Niebuhr, Bertrand Russell, Lionel Trilling, and a number of other writers whom I then read with nearly complete reverence.

For a young writer there is no duplicating the excitement of first publication. In *A Backward Glance*, Edith Wharton tells of the day she opened her mail to discover that three different magazines had accepted poems of hers. Such was the fever of her excitement that she ran up and down the staircase in her house, long skirt lifted, over and over again. I carried my letter of acceptance from the assistant managing editor of the *New Leader* in the pocket of my uniform shirt for days. At work at the recruiting station, I would sneak off to the john to read it again, for the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth time. I am now of the company of Hook and Niebuhr and Trilling, I would say to myself. Hot damn!

Had I not published that rather fragile magazine piece—"in any event" and "at any rate"—I should probably not have married as young as I did, which was at twenty-three. I recall that in one of his books Edmund Wilson, not known for delicacy in these matters, remarks that young men seek out the company of women owing to "the accumulated brimming over of spermatozoa." Not unbrimful myself, I had carried on with such young women as life in Little Rock had set in my path. At one point, I had known (as the Bible has it) a woman who, I later learned from Sergeant

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Jackie Taylor, was under surveillance by the FBI for associating with potentially violent segregationists. If she were under surveillance, then so, presumably, might I have been—not too close, I hoped. But when the young woman—bright and good-hearted with a lovely sense of humor—came along whom I was to marry, I plunged ahead, in good part because I already knew what I wanted to do with my life: make more sentences, paragraphs, pieces, books, an activity to which marriage then seemed no obstacle but instead a convenience. (It is, of course, neither.) So one sunny afternoon I informed Sergeant Duncan that I needed an hour or so off, and slipped out to the office of a justice of the peace across from the courthouse and married. Two months later, on my way to being discharged at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I left Little Rock with a Southern wife, a portable Olivetti, and a $200 dark green Ford sedan, a combination out of which someone with a proper knack would have been able to write a corking good country-and-western song.

II

FOUR years later, in 1964, I returned to Little Rock, now with children and furniture, after working at editorial jobs on magazines in Chicago and New York. New York on a small salary with children seemed a punishing place; it was also a city in which I was not getting much writing of my own done. A move seemed in order. Now that I had something resembling a trade—that of magazine editor—what could be cleverer than to light out for a place, Little Rock, Arkansas, where it wasn't practiced, for so far as I knew Little Rock had no magazines? But then it seemed to be my fate not so much to move to a place as to flee another place.

The last time I had landed in Little Rock I had come on a Trailways bus from the southwest; now I would be arriving on a Greyhound bus from the northeast. Not much in the way of progress, I fear. My wife had preceded me with our children, also by bus, and had rented a house before I arrived. I had stayed behind to see our furniture put on the moving van and to sell my small library to a man from a used-book store near Union Square, who carried it out in three trips with a shopping cart. I retained only my copies of Max Beerbohm's slender volumes, a beautiful green-covered Bodley Head edition of *Ulysses*, and a set of Macaulay's *History of England*, which I still haven't read.

My wife had rented a house on Cumberland Street, only a few blocks away from my Louisiana Street apartment, for the price—wondrous, after New York—of $100 a month. It had three bedrooms, a large living room and dining room, and a glass-enclosed study that led onto a porch large enough to be called a veranda. (One morning a few months after we moved in, my wife, in a parody of Tennessee Williams, swept onto the veranda in her nightgown and asked, "Are the boys from the university here yet?" "Why Blanche darling," I replied, "you know the university moved away thirty years ago.") The house was originally built for the daughter and son-in-law of the woman who owned the large white house next door. That woman had died, and the daughter, now herself a widow, had moved into the larger house. She was of the old school, and the last person in Little Rock, man or woman, whom I was to hear refer to Negroes as "darkies." On the same block, to the south of the house we lived in, in what once must have been the stable, lived a family who had originally come from a small town in southeastern Arkansas; the man was one of those Southerners who, though without much conversation, could repair anything from a toaster to a DC-10.

Throughout my time in the South I was always running into men who could make and fix things. I met men whose advice on how to repair my used cars involved my removing the engine, or installing a new clutch, or putting in something they called a "throw-out bearing"—advice I was perfectly unprepared to take. I met men who knew how to breed animals, lay out driveways, do elaborate wiring, remove tree stumps with dynamite. On my first job I worked with a man who, on weekends, was building his own house—from scratch. I, on the other hand, could make one thing: sentences. But then on a desert island whom would you prefer to be with, a man who knows how to purify water or a man who can spot a dangling modifier?

Since there was no staggering need in Little Rock for a man who could make or fix sentences, I felt lucky to get the job I did, which was as something called "administrative officer" of the North Little Rock Urban Renewal Agency. During the time I worked there—roughly seven months—I administered nothing. North Little Rock was a town of forty or so thousand people located across the Arkansas River from Little Rock. It was for the most part less prosperous, less interesting, more ragged and redneck—*mutatis mutandis* (to say the least), it might be considered a Jackson Heights or Astoria to Little Rock's Manhattan. The idea behind the urban-renewal program was to give the town something like a *raison d'être* by clearing land for a sleek new produce market center and rehabilitating some of the more dismal Negro neighborhoods with the aid of injections of federal housing funds.

My job at the North Little Rock Urban Renewal Agency turned out to be, precisely, making and fixing sentences. I wrote publicity releases and edited correspondence written by other staff members that went off to Washington or to regional offices in Dallas. At one point I published a 2,000-word profile of the town's mayor in the now de-

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funct magazine *Pageant*; the mayor was a suave version of the good-ole-boy type who, in his late forties, was still getting into bar brawls while attending mayors' conferences in Northern cities. I omitted the brawls from my profile and featured instead the hundreds of new mercury vapor lamps he had put up in North Little Rock. Around the office I spoke almost exclusively that lingua franca of the American male, sports, with a special emphasis on Southwest Conference football. The work was dull but the pay was low.

To supplement it I had begun to review books fairly regularly for the *New Republic*; I had, as always in the South, a good deal of time on my hands. I felt myself gradually becoming something of a Southerner. I drove a series of hopeless used cars, including a Corvair (the car, unsafe at any speed, on which Ralph Nader made his reputation) and a twelve-year-old Cadillac—a real cream puff, as they say out on the lot—the maintenance of whose shaky transmission was paid for by reviews of the works of John Updike, Norman Mailer, and George P. Elliott. At home we acquired a dog and two cats. My three-year-old son had taken to calling his infant brother "honey-chile baby." I awoke at 3:00 A.M. to go fishing in the White River with my father-in-law. I never hunted, but I did on occasion belt down moonshine. I danced to shit-kicking country bands at highway honky-tonks in whose parking lots one could always depend on finding some youthful good ole boy vomiting his guts out. Once, after someone tried to break into our house at night, I borrowed a revolver from a co-worker, which I kept in the drawer of my night-table in the event the burglar returned. (Thank God, he never did.) On that same night-table lay the bound galley proofs of Arthur Koestler's *The Act of Creation*. Anybody around here want to talk about two cultures?

IN BETWEEN discussing the relative merits of Frank Broyles and Darrell Royal, the coaches, respectively, of the Arkansas Razorbacks and the Texas Longhorns; writing letters to the director of the regional office of the Housing and Home Finance Agency; and listening to endless friendly assurances from my co-workers about how most Negroes down South liked things just as they were, I somehow managed, while on the job, to find time to write an article entitled "The Row Over Urban Renewal" that was accepted by *Harper's*. Publication of this article marked a turning point. As a result of it, I became, for a period of about four months, one of this country's leading housing experts (of whom there were not too many). As for my expertise, my article ran to some 5,000 words; on the entire subject of urban renewal I should say that my complete knowledge ran to something like 7,000 words. But let that pass: the country needs experts, and for the moment, however fraudulently, I was one of those in housing. I appeared on a panel about the subject along with Edward Banfield and others at the University of Chicago Law School; I was offered a job as director of public relations for the planning commission of the City of Baltimore; I was approached for the job of speech writer in Washington for Robert Weaver, then Secretary of Housing.

But the most interesting offer I had was to become the first director of the anti-poverty program of Pulaski County (which encompassed Little Rock, North Little Rock, and the surrounding area). One afternoon I was called in to the offices of the United Fund to speak to a man named Cal Ledbetter, who was from an old Little Rock family, had a Ph.D. in political science from Princeton, and nourished political ambitions as a middle-of-the-road progressive in state politics, to ask if the job would be one I would care to try. After thinking about it for a day or two, I said that I would indeed. The year was 1965, and Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, from all reports, had begun in seriousness. I was twenty-eight years old and this job gave me my first opportunity—no small incentive—to be a boss. The salary was $9,600. The pay was still low, but the work suddenly seemed a lot more interesting.

Ours was not to be a large program, at least not at the outset. I had a budget that allowed me to hire four people with the job title of field workers, and a secretary. As field workers I hired two young men, recent graduates of Southern black colleges; a very savvy white woman named Ruth Arnold, who had been around in the days of the Central High School integration crisis and who had worked for the Arkansas Council of Human Relations and knew an enormous amount about the personal lives and politics of the leading figures in Little Rock; and an acquaintance who had been working as a teacher at the Arkansas School for the Blind, where some years before the Indian writer Ved Mehta had been a student.

Our offices were two rooms above the United Fund headquarters. The first day on the job, a man who worked for the United Fund entered my office to inform me he had alerted the other occupants of the building that we would have Negroes—pronounced, in that day, "Nigras"—working for us who would be using the same upstairs men's room. ("Here we go," I thought, the line from Phil Harris's old song, ". . . and that's what I like about the South," playing in my head.) Our task was to define the extent and locations of poverty in Pulaski County and, after having done so, to determine which of the various anti-poverty programs we wished to apply for. We were also—and this was chiefly to be my job—to explain the purposes of the anti-poverty program to the community at large and to those poor sections of the community that were to be its beneficiaries.

My preparation for this job—apart from my role as one of the country's leading housing ex-

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perts, which still had another month or so to run —was that I was a liberal, and hence could be expected to care about the poor, and that I had read Michael Harrington's book, *The Other America*. The rumor had it that someone had put Dwight Macdonald's lengthy *New Yorker* review of Harrington's book under the nose of John F. Kennedy, and from it the President derived the notion of mounting a war on poverty some day. I recall having been impressed by the book the first time I read it—a portion had earlier run in COMMENTARY—but I can testify that it is not a book that richly repays rereading. Its definition of poverty, and especially its statistics, are wobbly in the extreme; at one point Harrington seems to have (if I remember rightly) something like between a fourth and a third of the nation as poor. Even I, who then wished to believe the worst about the United States, could not quite buy that one. But if Harrington's statistics were somewhat cooked to begin with, in the months ahead I nevertheless served them up reheated in what were to be my many local appearances as Little Rock's poverty guy.

As the poverty guy, I became a minor media figure in a small city—the adjectives are important here. I was often interviewed by the local press; I appeared frequently on the five and ten o'clock news. At 6:00 A.M. once I was on a television show called "Eye of Arkansas," delivering my Harringtonian statistics sandwiched in between a black quartet that sang "Mack the Knife" and a woman who ran the local gourmet food shop in a demonstration on how to make crêpes. I spoke before Rotary and Kiwanis Club luncheon meetings. I drew misty eyes from the pretty and well-heeled young Southern ladies of the Junior League when I told them that there were children in Harlem who had never seen an orange. (How the hell did I know that? I must have read it in Harrington; but how the hell did he know?) But my most surprising speaking engagements were in Negro churches. In these churches the most humdrum things I would say would be greeted by amens, hosannas, and choruses of "Say it out, man!," "Oh, yeah!," and "We hear you talkin'!" Had I not had a fairly accurate sense of my intrinsic dullness as a speaker, I might have been encouraged by this response to try my hand at a little faith healing.

WHAT did Little Rock's blacks think of me? Insofar as they thought of me at all, it was probably as another white man passing through town. I tried to deal as evenhandedly as I could with the two young blacks who worked for the anti-poverty program, going to lunch with them when we were all in the office, making certain that they were invited to all parties and social functions. But they had been brought up to handle themselves with extreme circumspection around whites, and it was not always easy to break through. One of the two took to calling me "Boss," inserting the word into nearly every sentence he addressed to me, until one day, when he said, "What's happening, Boss?," I replied—humor not always being a clear advantage in race relations—"Nothing much, Rochester," which got a nervous laugh of the kind comedians call "tension release."

One evening the director of the Little Rock Urban League, a black man not much older than I, arranged a meeting for me with what then passed for the black power structure in the city. I was there to explain the rudiments of the anti-poverty program. We sat at a rectangular table. The director of the Urban League, opening the meeting, assured me that this was to be an informal session. "Gentlemen, allow me to introduce our new anti-poverty director, Joe Epstein, to you. Joe, going around the table from your right, this is Reverend Fulks, Attorney Bledsoe, President Simpson of Philander Smith College, Dr. Wingate. . . ." Informal? Everyone in the room seemed to have a title but me, which struck me as a comic reversal of old black-white roles that also carried a touch of the spirit of *Amos 'n Andy*. After I had my say, the others spoke, each with a strong ceremonial flavor. There was something of a performance quality to the evening, with the proviso that everyone in the room except me had no doubt seen the performance scores of times before. What they said among themselves after I left, I cannot know. Some must, at a minimum, have felt a strong distrust, for the anti-poverty program promised to shake things up—that, in any case, is how I sold it to them—and the men gathered in that room had actually all done quite well with things as they were. Potentially they had something to lose if the anti-poverty program succeeded. As it turned out, they needn't have worried.

My dealings with the authentically poor were hardly any closer. I visited segregated schools, where, especially in the outlying areas, facilities had passed to the stage beyond dilapidation, windows had no screens, and flies settled on lumpy food in dark cafeteria kitchens. I accompanied my staff of field workers through ramshackle houses, where wooden stoves gave off the only heat in winter and holes in walls were plugged with rags and broken windows covered in cardboard. On one such tour of a so-called "poverty area," I mentioned to a black woman who was the local school principal that it was ironic all these sad houses seemed to have television sets. "Mr. Epstein," she said, "please do not knock those old television sets. Because of them the children in these homes hear what little good English they are likely to hear before they get to school." I recall attempting to explain to a young, bloated black woman, the mother of four illegitimate children—not a welfare racketeer, but someone who had had these children through passive ignorance—how impor-

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tant voter registration was, and noted that my explanation was greeted with the deepest, the most hopeless, incomprehension.

Poverty in Little Rock was real, but was the anti-poverty program? It was certainly real in the sense that there were offices and jobs and a man named Sargent Shriver in Washington who was the national director of the program, and checks flying around for millions of dollars to pay for salaries and services. But was it real in the sense of having any hope of bringing about the social change it promised and of the kind that I, as a local director, envisioned for it? Social change entails the transfer of power, and the record would appear to show that people who have power have not been known to give it up cheerfully. Nor have there been many instances of power being given to the powerless because the powerful feel an aching sense of the world's injustice. People have to take power for themselves. Was the delusion of anti-poverty bureaucrats such as myself monumental in thinking that we could transfer power that was not ours to transfer? Before I was on the job three months, I began to wonder about this.

All the grants I had hoped to apply for had behind them the dream of social change. Such roundly popular, noncontroversial programs as the Neighborhood Youth Corps, which supplied teen-agers with summer jobs and fattened everyone's payroll, and Headstart, which gave poor children a year of pre-schooling with free breakfasts thrown in, were no great problem. But I had it in mind to set up a legal-aid program (through which the poor would be able to sue for their rights), a birth-control program (which would at length lighten their economic burden), and a voter-registration drive (which, under the guise of registering poor people to vote in an election for the anti-poverty board, would make them a political force). More exotic programs were available; I seem to recall chuckling at what seemed to me the idiocy of something called "foster grandparents," which would give older people money to baby-sit for poor working mothers. But I had little interest in such things. Give the poor lawyers, condoms, and the vote, I thought, and you have given them a lot.

There was a minor problem or two. Lawyers, physicians, and local officials didn't quite feel as I did about these things. Everyone was worried about going too far too fast, and so such grants as I was able to apply for were rather piddling ones. Worse news, people to my Left, on whose support I had counted, were not hugely impressed by the anti-poverty program.

Now, nothing makes a liberal more nervous than not to have the approval of people to his Left. In this case, the people to my Left were the young men and women in the civil-rights movement, which, in Little Rock, meant the people in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) office in one of the city's black districts on 9th Street. Although I never became close to any of the SNCC people, I greatly admired them. What I admired about them was very simple: their physical courage. They had engaged in sit-ins and protests in tough Arkansas towns like Pine Bluff and Jonesboro at a time when they stood to have their heads bashed in for doing so. The then-leader of SNCC in Arkansas, a white man roughly my own age named Bill Hansen, had put in much time in jails across the South. Hansen was tall, slender, very political, and quite humorless. Once, after we had lunched together at a small restaurant on 9th Street, he dropped a few coins for a tip. "Why, Bill," I said, "Trotsky never tipped. He felt that tipping only supports a corrupt system, you know." Hansen picked up the coins.

Still, there was the physical courage, a fact not to be denied or washed away by psychology. People with a bent for psychology used to say that Bill Hansen had arrived at the point where he rather liked a good beating, which seemed to me a crummy notion. You may not care for someone who has returned from the front, but you have to respect his having been there. It was less easy to respect those kids, graduate students most of them, who came down South from Columbia, the University of Michigan, Boston University, and elsewhere to spend their summer in the civil-rights movement. They did odd jobs around the SNCC office; some of them taught at Philander Smith, Little Rock's black college. I recall asking a young man working for his Ph.D. at Columbia how he liked teaching at Philander Smith. He told me it was usually interesting, though there were some bad days, such as, in particular, when he had attempted to discuss the poetry of Paul Valéry in class. I must say, I had not thought such naiveté was possible in the world.

One sunny Sunday morning I drove out to the countryside to attend a statewide meeting of SNCC, where I explained how the anti-poverty program worked and how SNCC could apply for grants for programs of its own. But there was not much interest in what I had to say. SNCC was undergoing its own troubles. The organization had come into being during a time of great moral purity. There were segregationist laws on the books of the states of the South, and they needed to be challenged. Young SNCC kids, black and white, at the risk of their lives, challenged them. "In every social movement," Bayard Rustin once told me, "you need people who are willing to go to jail for their cause." But now the action seemed to be moving elsewhere. Protest itself seemed all but played out. On school integration, public accommodations, voting rights, and much else the segregationist South had in effect surrendered. Yet all SNCC knew was protest.

Not long after this, sitting in my office, I re-

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ceived a phone call from a young woman in the SNCC office who had come to Little Rock for the summer. She informed me there was to be a protest march on the state capitol building, and she thought I would want to be among the marchers. "If I were to march with you," I said, "you understand that my usefulness here would be at an end." "That's your problem," she said, and hung up. Around this time Stokeley Carmichael, with much fanfare, announced that "Black is beautiful," which really meant there was no longer any place for whites in the civil-rights movement. I sensed that my own time in the South was nearing its end.

Other, more personal items were involved. Petty inconveniences began to loom large. I had to wait a full day after its publication date to read the New York *Times*; the *New Yorker*, which I used to read on Tuesday in New York, didn't arrive until the following Monday in Little Rock. The town had no decent restaurants. The one Chinese restaurant in Little Rock, as an accommodation to the local populace, which was used to mopping up gravies, served slices of white bread with its meals. I no longer found it quite so amusing when, during the holiday season, local television announcers pronounced the word Hanukkah so that it sounded like Chattanooga. I longed for bookish conversation. I was growing tired of judging everyone by his views on race. I realized that I hadn't the temperament for compromise that is required of an effective bureaucrat. In spirit I was leaving the South and when I was offered a job at roughly twice my then-current salary to become a senior editor at Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. in Chicago, I took it and left the South in person.

III

My chief link with Little Rock was snapped with my divorce in 1970. Without a Southern wife, there was no reason for trips to the South. Yet, having lived in the South during crucial periods in my life, I have subconsciously come to consider myself partly a Southerner—in a way that I do not consider myself partly a New Yorker. I know I generally feel at home among Southerners. Not long ago I met with a magazine editor from Mississippi, who told me he had returned home recently to be with his family and, as he put it, "to talk a little Southern"—the phrase reminded me of talking a little Yiddish. For him, clearly, the South represented something akin to the old country, and I have felt something of this myself.

By now long an outsider, I had nonetheless maintained a former insider's interest in Little Rock and in Arkansas generally. I noted the demise from the national scene of the bulldog-faced Senator John McClellan and the retirement of the urbane J. William Fulbright, who used to tell his constituents back home that his real interest in foreign policy concerned his attempt to sell Arkansas agricultural products abroad—both to be replaced by smooth younger men who might as easily have come from, say, Michigan. The glad-handed and politically powerful Wilbur Mills, then chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, who insisted on going directly to first names on the few occasions I met him, had long since met his political Waterloo in the company of a stripper in the Tidal Basin in Washington. Orval Faubus, at seventy-six, had mounted a last campaign for governor (after serving six terms), but had his hopes for a last hurrah snuffed out in a sound primary defeat. My own political ambition in Arkansas was to be appointed state boxing commissioner, a job which, since the state holds no boxing matches that I know of, would leave plenty of free time for other things.

A few years ago, I received a letter from a reporter on the Arkansas *Democrat*, a business letter, which ended by his remarking, with Southern courtesy, that I was "a small legend in Little Rock." I answered that I did not know about the legend, but, being under 5'7", I would accept the small part. I also noted, to myself, that I ought to return for a visit. But to visit whom? My friend Jerry Neil had died; I had heard that Ruth Arnold, who had remarried and moved first to Washington, D.C. and then to Denver, had suffered a terrible stroke. Other friends and acquaintances were growing elderly; I was growing no younger. When I learned that Ruth Arnold and her husband had returned to live in Little Rock, I finally made the trip.

It had been twenty years since I last lived there, and the first thing I noticed upon arrival is that they had moved the airport on me. I remembered the old Little Rock airport as very small, almost cozy. Of major airlines, only Delta flew to the city, and one could never fly direct but invariably had to make a stop first either in Memphis or St. Louis. No longer. The airport itself now looked like the airport in almost every other secondary city I have been in. The weight of time pressed down upon me. The son who had called his younger brother "honey-chile baby" was now working in San Francisco; the honey-chile baby himself had graduated from college a month before. Being in Little Rock again I felt as if someone had turned the time-machine abruptly forward—almost violently so.

Much of this feeling was owing to the fact that my old mental landscape of the city had been altered. A new freeway tore through the center of town. The walk down Louisiana Street between my apartment and the recruiting station was now interrupted by it; the recruiting station itself had been torn down. Where I used to watch the revivalists, a small shopping center was being built. Downtown Little Rock had been transmogrified by several new skyscrapers, in which law offices, insurance companies, brokerage firms, and psycho-

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therapists did their business. Main Street shopping was now all but dead, for downtown Main Street had been turned into a mall, but a mall that was obviously a bust, or so, walking along its deserted blocks at four in the afternoon, I gathered from the preponderance of discount and cut-rate shops. Except at midday, when there was some lunch-time traffic on the street, downtown Little Rock felt like Wall Street on a Sunday. People drove in their air-conditioned cars into the air-conditioned garages in the basement of their air-conditioned office buildings and then drove out again at night to their air-conditioned homes. The white middle class was moving farther and farther west, doing its shopping in suburban malls and plazas, sending its children, where the money was available, to preponderantly white private schools.

The old Marion Hotel had been razed. It was there that politicians used to gather when the state legislature was in session to do their drinking and make their deals. I used to have my hair cut in the basement of the Marion by a barber then in his seventies who kept a portrait of Jesus Christ alongside his barbering tools and a pair of pajamas in his towel cabinet; the pajamas were there in the event that it snowed—which it did about once every three years—and he had to spend the night in the hotel. Where the Marion had been, a new glass-and-red-brick skyscraper hotel and convention center now stood. Across the street an old fleabag of a hotel called the Capital had been beautifully restored, its old marble and wood handsomely refurbished. I was taken to lunch in its restaurant, an absolutely up-to-the-moment, altogether elegant establishment, with waiters announcing the day's specials and rolling out the sweets trolley at the close of the meal. I heard that a French-Swiss couple had opened a placed called Jacques and Suzanne a number of years ago, and a few of their chefs, having left them, had begun restaurants of their own. Refugees from Vietnam and Taiwan had also opened restaurants in town; the days of chop suey mopped up with slices of white bread were obviously over.

Stately mansions, in the antebellum style, once inhabited by single families, had been broken up into apartments, some of them sold as condominiums. The Arkansas Arts Center, built not long before my second stay in Little Rock, was currently housing a Surrealist show. On the way to see it, driving over in a rented car, I heard over the radio that the first cellular car telephones were now available in Little Rock. Some of the older homes on the east side were being expensively revamped —by, it was said, yuppies. Yuppies, car phones, trendy restaurants, continental food, Surrealist shows, skyscrapers, freeways slicing through town, suburban malls—from one perspective progress. or at least modernization, seemed to be playing a strong hand in Little Rock.

From another perspective, it seemed as if nothing had changed and some things had even worsened, giving that decline-and-fall feeling that overtakes us all at different times in contemporary cities. On the east side of Little Rock the houses of poor blacks appeared as desolate—and as desolating—as ever. A broken-down car, two wheels missing, rested exhausted at the side of a house whose porch was half-collapsed; out front, three barefoot children and a pregnant mother who appeared to be in a stupor stood on a scraggly lawn. The scene might as easily have been set in 1932 as in 1986, awaiting capture by a photographer like Walker Evans. It would take more than snappy government programs to lift such a family out of its morass. And not even snappy programs were forthcoming. What was left of the anti-poverty program, now run by a black director, was reported to be in tatters; there were even murmurings of scandalous dealings in real estate on the part of program officials. The school system, too, was said to be in a parlous state, standards visibly slipping, mayhem in high-school classrooms always a distinct possibility.

In Little Rock, blacks are currently in control of the city's welfare and educational establishments. The media, which normally adore scandal and exposé, have apparently declared hands-off. A friend of mine, a liberal and a former Catholic priest who served on the anti-poverty program board when I was the program's director, averred that he hadn't the heart to speak out about what he knows to be so. To speak out would be to court being called a racist, which, given Little Rock's heritage, is the last thing people of good heart can bear to hear. So people pretend—as they do in other cities, North and South—that it isn't there while hoping that, in time, the thing that isn't there will go away.

PROGRESS, regress, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*; on a three-day visit to a town I once knew well, I could not finally make up my mind in which direction Little Rock was headed. A moment when progress seemed to shimmer with promise was when I visited the downtown offices of a new journal to be called the *Southern Magazine*. It is one of a stable of local magazines, one a business weekly, another a monthly on the model of *New York* (Ten Best Places in town to get barbecue, ice cream, a hiatus hernia, etc.). What impressed me was the youthfulness of everyone in the office—the median age looked to be about thirty—and their go-ahead spirit. I was reminded of something told to me by Midge Decter, who had worked for the Mississippian Willie Morris when he was editor of *Harper's* and when that magazine had a great many Southerners as contributors. Those Southern boys could be hugely talented, vastly ambitious, Midge Decter had remarked, but they always seemed to want to stop for a beer. With the staff of the *Southern Magazine* gathered about me, I retold this story.

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"Remember this," I said, underscoring the moral, "and try not to stop for a beer quite so frequently."

The next day at lunch I joined the editors of the *Southern Magazine* for—what else?—a beer. They took me to what they said was the best barbecue restaurant in Little Rock, a black-run place on the far south side of town. A combination of soul and rock blared away on a radio turned all the way up. The barbecue was as good as advertised. We talked about magazines, with me, in this circle the wily old veteran, doing much of the talking. Outside it was up around 100 degrees. A walk sixty or so yards from the restaurant to the car was enough to set one's shirt clinging to one's back.

One of the chief editors of the new magazine, himself a Southerner who had worked for *Playboy* in Chicago and had now returned home to the South, drove me back to where I was staying. Through mists of heat, we drove past once-grand and now rather exhausted-looking neighborhoods, over freeways with skyscrapers in the background, down thoroughfares festooned with franchise operations of every kind; and driving along we talked about his return to the South, the new South really, where he hoped to finish out his professional life.

WHEN I lived in Little Rock, I now realize, the old South had been in its last throes. I hadn't much approved of it then and I was not all that pleased with the new South now. What was I: a utopian, or merely a habitual complainer? Sometimes, in my imaginings, I had thought about returning to live in Little Rock, where life is less expensive, more scenic, calmer, rather out-of-it perhaps but not unpleasantly so. But this, I recognized on my recent visit, was sheerest fantasy. The city has changed and so have I; a chapter of my life—two important chapters, actually—are over, and there is no call for an epilogue or afterword. It isn't so much a matter of not being able to go home again, for Little Rock was never, strictly speaking, my home. It is more a matter of beginning to learn at long last that one of the things that makes the past so wonderful is that it cannot, finally, be recaptured.

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Middle East Perplexities

Elie Kedourie

THERE is a famous episode in Stendhal's novel, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, in which the hero, Fabrice del Dongo, participates in the battle of Waterloo without realizing at the time, and even until some time afterward, that he has taken part in—been part of—a momentous event. The episode is exemplary, indeed archetypal. It shows and illustrates a general condition inseparable from, and implicit in, politics, diplomacy, and war.

In these enterprises the participants inevitably operate in a fog. They may know where they have come from—although even this is not sure—and they may have some idea of where they want to go. But how what is happening at any particular moment, how their own actions and those of their friends, rivals, and enemies will help or hinder their venture—all this is wrapped in obscurity. Policies and their outcomes have no necessary connection with one another. To undertake any action is to elicit a response which, from the nature of the case, is unpredictable. And the response will in turn itself elicit a counter-response equally unpredictable. And yet action has to be taken, policies adopted, ventures fraught with dangers embarked upon. And it must not be thought that safety lies in abstention from action. To govern is to choose, and not to choose is also to choose. Action requires intelligence, shrewdness, prudence, strong nerves, and courage. But all these qualities may, nonetheless, fail to ensure success—may even end in failure.

In short, all politics is a dilemma—which, as the dictionary tells us, is a perplexing or awkward situation, a choice between risky alternatives, both unfavorable or disagreeable in some degree or other. Hence the response of the great Lord Salisbury to someone who commiserated with him on the great burden which the consequences of making so many momentous decisions imposed on him. "With the consequences," Salisbury said, "I have nothing to do." He meant that, once he had weighed the alternatives—the equally perplexing and awkward alternatives—and then made his decision, the consequences were in the lap of the gods, not for him to brood and worry over.

We, the historians who follow in the wake of the men of action and seek to make sense of what they did, have only one unmistakable advantage over them—that of hindsight. When all is consummated, if the evidence is there and we possess enough ability and imagination, we can pinpoint the exact place where the dilemma was resolved, can show where failure—whether of judgment or courage—happened, or how the unexpected intervened and then, despite the expenditure of much intelligence and courage, against all expectations a venture failed. In coming to these judgments, we do not presume to claim we are shrewder or that our nerves are stronger than those of the men of action—the contrary is probably often the case—but only that we possess what, from the nature of things, they cannot ever possess, namely, hindsight. It is because the decisions and their outcomes are past that we, from our vantage point, can see and make sense of them.

The dilemmas I speak of here are Middle East dilemmas. From World War I on, the Middle East has presented both foreign and native policy-makers with a particularly large number of awkward and perplexing situations. The resolution of these dilemmas has generally led to failure and loss, not only with respect to the interests which the policy-makers had set out to protect, but also for groups and communities in the Middle East who were willy-nilly affected by the fallout from these decisions.

It is of course true that Middle East dilemmas and their resolutions are not to be compared in the gravity of their global consequences with decisions taken in the first half of this century in order to resolve European dilemmas: decisions such as Sir Edward Grey's acquiescence in secret Anglo-French staff talks in the years before 1914; or Austria-Hungary's policy in the weeks following the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo; or Anthony Eden's passivity following Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936; or Neville Chamberlain's zigzag between the abandonment of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and the guarantee to Poland in 1939. But sufficient unto the day is the failure thereof. A historian of the modern Middle East has a long list of dilem-

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mas, the resolution of which resulted in failure and loss. Some of the more significant and striking of these are worth some scrutiny.

IN APRIL 1936, Arab disturbances broke out in Palestine which soon developed into a serious rebellion. The rebellion was a protest against the project of a Jewish National Home and the immigration of large numbers of European Jews. It was no less a protest against the policies of the British Mandatory administration which the Arab leaders held responsible for encouraging and supporting Zionist expansion. The issue before the British government was then how to deal with this rebellion which, in the event, went on from 1936 to 1939, with an intermission of sorts between the autumn of 1936 and the autumn of 1937. An armed rebellion is a challenge to the lawful authority, and it cannot be allowed to succeed. The British government eventually found that it had to brace itself and defeat this challenge. It finally did so, and the rebellion at last petered out.

A government faced with such a rebellion must seek to examine the grievances which brought it about, and if possible provide remedies. The leaders of the Palestine Arabs insisted that at the root of their grievances was the policy of a Jewish National Home, and that Jewish immigration was the most threatening and dangerous aspect of this policy. A government seeking to tranquilize would couple suppression of violent rebellion with measures to remedy the grievances. The limitation—perhaps even the drastic limitation—of Jewish immigration would now most probably be necessary. And Jewish immigration was in fact limited, and in the end quite drastically limited.

But the rebellion elicited yet another response from the British government—a response which was to have dire consequences for British interests in Palestine and the Middle East, as well as for numerous Middle Eastern groups, and not least for the Arabs of Palestine themselves. This second British response to the rebellion was predicated on an analysis of the situation by a high official in the Foreign Office, George Rendel, who was head of the Eastern Department. He argued that the rebellion in Palestine was not simply a local phenomenon, but in reality a manifestation of a much wider movement, that of pan-Arabism—a movement which he saw sweeping with an irresistible force across the whole of the Arab world.

It thus followed that the Palestine problem could not be settled in Palestine itself. Rather, its settlement required that the Arab states should be involved, and the aims of Arab nationalism satisfied. This was in fact done at the urging of Rendel and of Eden, the new, young, inexperienced Foreign Secretary who was much influenced and inspired by the forceful, persuasive, and pertinacious head of the Eastern Department. This proved a fateful development, since it introduced a large number of parties with many discordant, not to say incompatible, interests into what had been a fairly limited—indeed, parochial—conflict. Thus, by their action, the British made it impossible for themselves either to settle the conflict or to preserve their interests in Palestine, since (as a general rule which this case confirms) the greater the number of parties to a conflict, the more difficult it is to settle.

Eventually, in 1947, the British decided to refer the problem to the United Nations, since—as they saw their dilemma—they were unable either to impose a settlement on the Jews or to devise one which would satisfy all of the Arab parties. This particular resolution of their dilemma rested on a calculation: since any settlement which attracted U.S. support would *ipso facto* attract the hostility of the USSR and its followers, and vice versa, there would not be found a sufficient majority in the UN to support any settlement whatsoever, and the resulting deadlock would then leave Britain with a much freer hand to deal with the problem. How this happy conjuncture was to be exploited remained, however, obscure. In any case, the calculation proved to be a miscalculation, since in the event the Soviet Union and the U.S. supported the same solution, namely, partition of the land between two sovereign states, one Jewish and the other Arab, with an internationally administered enclave in Jerusalem. This singularly limited—in fact, it did away with—any British freedom of action. There is no evidence that anyone in the British government envisaged this possibility, or asked himself what options would be open should the possibility materialize. The miscalculation became evident in the autumn of 1947, and by then there was hardly time or opportunity to avoid, or remedy, or palliate its consequences.

The dilemma was now sharper than ever. It was resolved by declaring that Britain would not help in enforcing any settlement which did not have the agreement of both sides, and that in any case the British were shortly withdrawing from Palestine. It was obvious that thus to leave the hapless inhabitants to their own devices would at the very least lead to civil war, or perhaps even to international war. But this was thought preferable to giving offense to the Arab states by agreeing to and helping to enforce the UN decision. In such a case, it was feared, the substantial British interests in the Middle East would all be put at risk.

The miscalculation here was based on a twofold premise: that there was a tight connection between what happened in Palestine and the safeguarding of British interests in the region; and that the hostilities in Palestine which would necessarily result from the British evacuation could, in no conceivable circumstances, redound to Britain's disadvantage. But British interests in the Middle East were then much too varied, and threats to them much too multifarious, to be simply governed by what happened in Palestine. And

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to the extent that they were so governed, hostilities in Palestine, made inevitable by the sudden and total British withdrawal, did damage these interests, since hostilities ended with the creation of the state of Israel and the defeat of the Arab states in war. This defeat administered a severe shock to various Arab regimes, and this in turn led to a series of military coups d'état which brought to power new regimes distinctly more inimical to Britain.

There is another Middle East dilemma relating to Palestine in 1948—one which faced a local ruler rather than a great power. In the wake of the November 1947 vote in the UN to partition Palestine, Abdullah, the king of Jordan, desired to annex those parts allotted to the Arabs, and in February 1948 he obtained the consent of his allies and patrons, the British, to such a step. This need not have led to hostilities between him and the Jews, who had welcomed the UN resolution; Abdullah, however, decided that he wanted more than the areas allotted to the Arab state. In particular he coveted Jerusalem. Therefore, at the last minute, just before the British evacuation, he broke with the Jewish Agency, with which he had been the only Arab ruler to maintain good relations ever since the beginning of the British Mandate, and then opted for war. This decision led the other Arab states to join in the invasion of Palestine, either out of solidarity (as in the case of Iraq which was ruled by Abdullah's relatives) or (as in the case of Egypt) out of rivalry and dislike of the prospect of Abdullah's aggrandizement.

This war is still, almost forty years later, not settled, but this much at any rate is clear: Abdullah's very adventurous resolution of his dilemma —the dilemma of whether or not to fight the Jews—led directly to his murder in 1951 by a Palestinian Arab in the Jerusalem he had so coveted.

ANOTHER Middle East dilemma arose for Britain following the military coup d'état of July 1952 in Egypt, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. The new rulers took over and pursued with even greater insistence the twin demands which Egyptian governments after 1945 had been making, namely, the unity of the Nile Valley and the evacuation of British troops from Egyptian territory. The new regime failed to attain its first objective, but, after much negotiation, the British did agree to the evacuation of the Suez Canal base. This gave Nasser much prestige and greatly increased his elbow room in the conduct of foreign policy.

At the same time it was involved in negotiating the evacuation of its troops from Egypt, the British government was trying, with the help and support of the United States, to set up an anti-Soviet defense organization to include both Arab and non-Arab states. An attempt was made to persuade Nasser to join this treaty, but the attempt failed, essentially because he could not obtain in exchange a recognition of Egypt's primacy over other Arab states. In the event, the defense organization materialized as the Baghdad Pact, which Iraq joined, thereby seeming to secure for itself the prestige and influence Nasser had sought for Egypt.

The Baghdad Pact alienated Nasser from the Western camp, but the alienated Nasser had been strengthened and given greater freedom of action by the disappearance of the British military presence in Egypt. He used this freedom of action to establish increasingly close relations with the Soviet Union which, at one bound, was now able to leapfrog the territory of the Middle Eastern members of the Baghdad Pact and ensconce itself in the eastern Mediterranean. If Nasser was to be alienated then he should not have been strengthened, and if he was to be strengthened then he should not have been alienated.

When the 1952 military coup occurred in Egypt, it enjoyed the sympathy and support of U.S. officials. The theory behind this support was that the coup represented a progressive development likely to benefit American interests. The coup, it was believed, would improve social and economic conditions in Egypt and would thus conduce to stability. It would hence diminish the possibility of civil unrest, which otherwise would have been inevitable under the reactionary monarchical regime of King Farouk. In short, it was believed that the U.S. and Nasser's Free Officers were bound by natural affinities, not to speak of a natural alliance—the more so since the Free Officers were against the continuation of the British presence in Egypt. For this meant that they were nationalists and opposed to imperialism; and these U.S. officials fervently believed that a new and stable world order was possible only with the eradication of imperialism.

These views were based on political and sociological theories the cogency and coherence of which were most doubtful, depending as they did on long chains of assumptions and inferences joined by weak or nonexistent links. To base a policy on such theories was, as events soon proved, both hazardous and foolish. It took under a year from the signature of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty in 1954, whereby the British undertook to evacuate the Suez Canal base, to the Egyptian arms deal with Czechoslovakia which alienated Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and led him to cancel the financing of the Aswan Dam. This was followed by Egypt's nationalizing of the Suez Canal, and eventually by the Anglo-French expedition against Egypt in the autumn of 1956.

The expedition, in turn, led to an abrupt and violent turnabout in U.S. policy. The U.S., in virtual collusion (to use a word much favored at the time) with the USSR, took up the cudgels on behalf of the Egyptian regime, humiliated its two principal NATO allies, and procured a triumph for Colonel Nasser. This act seems to have been

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justified in the mind of President Eisenhower—who was the prime mover—by some of the same cloudy sociopolitical speculations that had led the U.S. to support the Egyptian coup in 1952. His impolitic act dealt a powerful blow to NATO solidarity, whose reverberations are still by no means exhausted. With it originated what may be called the neutralist current within NATO, seen today at its most striking in the condemnatory European reaction to the American raid on Libya in April 1986.

Less than two years after the Suez affair—in still another turn of the screw—the U.S. was compelled to send a military expedition to Lebanon to protect it from the threat of a Nasserite takeover, a threat which was the direct outcome of U.S. support for Nasser in the autumn of 1956. Thus, during the space of six years, between 1952 and 1958, the Egyptian military regime was first supported, then opposed, then even more strongly supported, only to be again strongly opposed. Had these gyrations not actually taken place, they would have been beyond belief. It is highly unlikely that the predictable consequences of the various and contradictory decisions were carefully weighed and considered; it is perhaps just as unlikely that the policy-makers, blithely entering upon their decisions, were at all aware of the dilemmas which faced them.

The same may be said of the Kennedy administration which followed. In 1962, a coup deposed the Imam of Yemen. Nasser, who had been aware of the plot, hastened to send an expedition to support the new regime at San'a. This was in the hope that Yemen would provide a base from which to subvert the Saudi regime and perhaps—who knows?—eventually control the oil riches of the Arabian Peninsula. The new U.S. administration, all sympathy for liberation struggles, hastened to recognize the new Egyptian-sponsored regime in San'a. It thus gave its benison, wittingly or not, to Nasser's schemes. Had he succeeded in his main purpose and destroyed the Saudi regime, the outcome would have been extremely disagreeable to the U.S. As it was, the Egyptian expedition became bogged down in tribal and guerrilla warfare which it failed to control or eradicate, and was withdrawn in 1967, following the Six-Day War, when Nasser was in no position to resist the conditions the Saudis attached to the economic help he sorely needed.

But the Egyptian presence in Yemen helped greatly to subvert the British position in Aden. Guerrillas and terrorists, organized, armed, and financed by the Egyptians, created much disorder in Aden and its hinterland. This persuaded the Labor administration in Britain—which, it is true, did not take much persuading—abruptly to abandon the colony to one "liberation front" which had eliminated its rival, thus giving a practical demonstration of Mao's barbarous dictum that authority and legitimacy come out of the barrel of a gun. Soon afterward, Aden became a Communist stronghold and a Soviet base. That the Egyptian presence in Yemen would damage the British position in Aden was a reasonable expectation. How such damage would conduce to U.S. interests was, most probably, a question never asked when recognition was accorded to a regime which was an instrument of Nasser's purposes.

American policy toward Egypt, if it is to be judged by these episodes, must be held to have been lacking in strategic vision, to have failed to ask what the interests of the U.S. in the Middle East were and how they could best be realized. No policy based on a strategic vision would have dealt with Nasser as he was dealt with during the Eisenhower administration, nor would it have seen any benefit in acquiescing in, and thus in a measure supporting, his adventure in Yemen. Policy seems rather to have been dominated by unexamined presuppositions concerning the character of Arab politics and Arab society, heedless of the changes and vicissitudes to which it was reasonable to expect they would be subject.

Another particular shortcoming of U.S. policy was to be excessively dominated by preoccupations and problems considered highly important by states in the region but which did not necessarily have the same importance for the U.S. A case very much in point is the Arab-Israel conflict.

Over the decades, many administrations tried to resolve or mitigate that conflict, but none came to office so determined to settle the issue once and for all as did the Carter administration. Could it be that such determination, such insistence, was misplaced, that the question was whether the U.S. should take the initiative in resolving this conflict? For all attempts by outsiders at promoting a settlement had hitherto aroused great suspicions, and raised tension instead of abating it. The reason is simple and has already been touched upon: owing to the large number of parties who had become involved, any possible resolution of the conflict would work to the detriment of one party or another, who would thus have every incentive to prevent what the Carter administration yearned for, namely, a comprehensive settlement.

To attempt such a settlement necessarily attracted the hostility of Israel, which did not relish the prospect of all its enemies ganging up on it, aided perhaps by the U.S. and certainly by the USSR which, for good measure, the Carter administration wished to involve in the negotiation. And a comprehensive settlement at that juncture also worked against Egyptian interests, since Sadat was at odds with the Soviets, and did not want to sit in a conference where they would favor and support Syria. Hence his dramatic move for peace in October 1977, which disturbed and shocked the Carter administration.

Sadat's initial move, undertaken without benefit of U.S. mediation, was a windfall, miraculous-

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ly showing a way out of the dilemma which the U.S. had set for itself. Indeed, the agreement between Israel and Egypt bade fair to make the Arab-Israel conflict die of inanition, since without Egypt, no combination of Arab states could risk another outbreak of fighting. In the meantime, American attention was urgently required elsewhere. Conditions in Iran were visibly deteriorating, and Iran was incomparably more important to U.S. interests than a comprehensive settlement—most likely unattainable—of the Arab-Israel dispute.

Yet the impression is very strong that there was barely an attempt to understand, let alone arrest, the damage to U.S. interests represented by a timid and hesitant Shah floundering in uncharted and perilous waters. One might almost say that the Shah's timidity and hesitancy were no less than that of the administration. Such was the disarray in Washington that the Shah's downfall and Khomeini's triumph were initially received with relief. Yet the Ayatollah's advent, as could have been prudently foreseen, spelled serious perils arising out of regional turbulence, and out of the temptations and opportunities thereby presented to a superpower which happens to be the next-door neighbor of Iran and Afghanistan, and scarcely more distant from Pakistan and India.

The same absence of strategic vision, the same dominance of unexamined presuppositions, are evident under Carter's successor. When the Israelis laid siege to Beirut during the summer of 1982, the PLO was escorted to safety by a quadripartite force including a U.S. contingent. What was the utility of saving Yasir Arafat and the PLO? Even if a settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict were really an overriding necessity, the PLO could not possibly deliver such a settlement. Dealing with it would antagonize Israel, and also Syria, Israel's most important antagonist today.

With the PLO escorted to safety, the quadripartite force withdrew from Beirut. But it came back shortly afterward, following the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Apart from administering a public rebuke to Israel, for what purpose did these contingents remain in Beirut for months on end, until forced out by Syrian-instigated terrorism? The purpose came to be the protection of a Lebanese government dominated by a Maronite-Sunni coalition, as had been the case since the beginning of Lebanese independence. But to protect such a government was misplaced benevolence, since this alienated—to no purpose—the Druse and the Shiites, who no longer acquiesced in the old order, and were thus drawn to the Syrian connection. In any event, the quadripartite force was too feeble, and the governments from which its contingents received their orders too timid, to go about protecting the Lebanese regime in earnest.

The U.S. in particular embarked on two whimsical enterprises in these months. It set out to reconstitute a nonsectarian and efficient Lebanese army, and it promoted an Israeli-Lebanese peace treaty. A Lebanese army is today a contradiction in terms, while an Israeli-Lebanese negotiation which leaves out Syria is like *Hamlet* without the Prince. Yet we have seen a great power embark in all seriousness on these paradoxical and absurd enterprises.

The peripeties of the Lebanese affair did offer an opening, which, however, the U.S. failed to exploit to advantage. Whatever the reasons for the presence of American troops in Lebanon, the fact remained that they were there at the invitation, and with the approval, of the lawful government. Could not this beachhead have been enlarged, and the U.S. presence appreciably increased? This would have changed the balance of power vis-à-vis the Soviets in the Middle East, and counteracted the neutralism or worse of NATO members in the Mediterranean. But it is most doubtful that the Lebanese situation was ever considered for its bearing on the difficulties and perils created by the Shah's downfall.

THE dilemmas and perplexities discussed here are, with the single exception of Abdullah's, those facing British and U.S. policy. This is only proper: Britain, in its day, was the dominant power in the Middle East, and today in that region one superpower, the U.S., faces another, the USSR. It is the dilemmas of such powers which have the greatest reality and significance. For they dispose of much greater weight than do smaller powers, and the way they resolve their dilemmas has far-reaching consequences for themselves and for others.

The resolutions of the dilemmas I have reviewed here have so consistently led to disappointment and failure that we may be tempted to agree with the famous sentiment expressed by the Swedish statesman Oxenstierna: "Do you not know, my son, with what little wisdom the world is governed?" Yet perhaps, on reflection, this verdict, at once so skeptical and so categorical, seems harsh or—worse—presumptuous, if not in Oxenstierna's mouth, then in that of a mere historian. For who among us, placed in the position of Carter, Eisenhower, Dulles, or Abdullah, can say, hand on heart, that he would have done any better?

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Lionel Trilling and His Critics

Lionel Abel

I WANT to call attention to an event in our literary life which is probably not without political meaning: a number of writers who once sharply attacked Lionel Trilling (died 1975) have recently recanted, substituting praise for their former criticism. I am thinking most immediately of Professor Mark Krupnick, who in the 70's savaged Trilling for his views on literature and culture but now, in the just-published *Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism*,* tries to convince us that his new-found admiration is genuine. Moreover, in his book Krupnick does some apologizing for, and explaining of, his nastiness during the 70's. And other critics have followed the same pattern of attacking Trilling and then praising him.

Perhaps the writer who established the pattern was the critic Irving Howe. In 1954, he published in *Partisan Review* a very well written though intellectually feeble essay, "This Age of Conformity." At the time, Howe's particular targets were the American intellectuals who were uninterested in his brand of radicalism; the most prominent of these was Lionel Trilling, who had befriended Howe and helped him find a publisher for his book on Sherwood Anderson.

In his 1954 article—the date, as will be seen, is important—Howe wrote:

> Trilling believes that there is an unmistakable improvement in the American cultural situation of today over that of, say, thirty years ago, while to me it seems that any comparison between the buoyant, free-spirited cultural life of 1923 and the dreariness of 1953, or between their literary achievements, must lead to the conclusion that Trilling is indulging in a pleasant fantasy.

But was not Howe the one indulging in a fantasy, and not a pleasant fantasy at that? Nineteen-twenty-three was only some two years after the Palmer raids on alleged political subversives. The segregation of blacks in this country was complete, uncontested, and defended by lynchings. In the "buoyant" culture of 1923 one could not buy a drink of hard liquor without breaking the law. There were great writers in 1923, but many of them were expatriates, finding the cultural climate inhospitable. We had one great playwright, Eugene O'Neill, who had made it on Broadway, but any efforts at theatrical productions less bourgeois and costly than those uptown had to wait until 1953, the very year in which Howe was overwhelmed by our cultural dreariness.

In 1954, the year Howe's essay was published, came the decision of the Supreme Court which declared for the desegregation of our schools. In those same years Faulkner was still adding to a body of work equal to anything written in the previous century, and our abstract expressionist painters were making New York City the art center of the world. And I must not fail to mention Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, and Robert Lowell, who did some of their best writing during the early 50's. I submit that after his attempt at cultural judgment Howe, instead of being encouraged in such efforts, should have been sat on by his peers.

In later years, Howe wrote admiringly of Trilling's efforts in criticism, countering with two and sometimes three compliments each of his initial statements of dispraise. In his 1984 memoir, *A Margin of Hope*, Howe mentions but does not cite his former criticisms of Trilling; instead, he invokes there a 1956 essay by the literary historian Joseph Frank which was even more severely critical of Trilling than Howe at his most outspokenly radical had allowed himself to be. Howe cites Joseph Frank's essay with what I take to be full approval. And in this connection I must note that Mark Krupnick in his present, favorable book on Trilling has also not neglected to praise Frank's piece. Finally, Robert Boyers, the editor of the quarterly *Salmagundi*, in his own effort in a little volume† to do some minor damage to Trilling's reputation, has called his work on Trilling an "extension of Joseph Frank's essay."

Frank's essay, "Lionel Trilling and the Conservative Imagination," originally appeared in *Sewanee Review* and was occasioned by the publication of a collection of Trilling's literary pieces

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* Northwestern University Press, 207 pp., $21.95 hardcover, $10.95 paper.

† *Lionel Trilling: Negative Capability and the Wisdom of Avoidance* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1977).

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under the title *The Opposing Self*. Before considering the essay I should observe that Frank too has felt some need to account for the criticisms of Trilling he made there. In an appendix to the essay, published in 1978 (in a special issue of *Salmagundi* devoted to Trilling), Frank gave his explanation of the state of mind in which it was written, and some of the circumstances that influenced his point of view in writing it. But the fact is that Frank's explanation itself needs much explaining.

In his explanatory note Frank writes: "These were, it should be remembered, the Eisenhower years . . . when McCarthyism was still very much of a force." As I remember, however, Senator McCarthy had been extinguished by the Eisenhower administration, and before 1956, the year the essay appeared. But no doubt Joseph Frank has in mind earlier doings of our government when the notions for his critique of Trilling were germinating. He quotes from a piece he published in 1952 in *Partisan Review*: "I think the first job for every American intellectual is to protest against the intellectual witchhunting and the drive for conformist thought control that is making our country the laughing stock—as well as the bugaboo—of the rest of the civilized world." Yet, again as I remember, Joseph Frank hardly did anything further on this "first job of every American intellectual"; it may be that Trilling did nothing, either, but then he evidently did not believe that to be an intellectual's first job.

In his 1978 explanation Joseph Frank goes on:

> During the early 1950's, as a matter of fact, I had spent several years living in France, which then seemed to me to be producing works of art and ideas (particularly the latter) of great interest and vitality. I had been particularly struck by the attempt of such writers as Sartre and Camus (not to mention many others) to work out a synthesis of Marxism and existentialism, to unite the social with the artistic and the metaphysical, and in this way to enlarge the previous narrow boundaries of official Marxist-Leninist dogma. Such efforts had of course been familiar to me since my student days in the 1930's, which had seen in the United States the important attempt made by *Partisan Review* to unite a social radicalism rooted in Marxist ideas with literary experimentalism and an openness to the cultural avant-garde independent of political prescriptions. . . .
>
> [T]he same endeavor was being carried forward, in an even more philosophically rigorous, energetic, and ambitious fashion, in such works of the immediate post-World War II period as Sartre's *What Is Literature?* and Camus's *L'homme révolté* [*The Rebel*]. . . . In these works, whatever my disagreement . . . on specific matters of detail, I could feel the tension of the same struggle that had animated *The Liberal Imagination*—the struggle between social idealism and artistic or metaphysical awareness, the ambition to work out a new synthesis of the two or, at the very least, not to sacrifice one in the presumed interests of the other. It was thus in a frame of mind sensitized to this particular issue that I received *The Opposing Self* for review, and began to grapple with the problem of defining my reaction to it.

What I accept as true and rightly put in this statement of Joseph Frank's case for his essay is the notion that a similar tension animated the essays of Trilling and Camus's *The Rebel*, as well as certain essays that Sartre wrote before *What Is Literature?* But there are unacceptable errors in this explanation, both of understanding and of fact, and this from a critic whose scholarship I, for one, had assumed to be impeccable. Camus did *not* try to synthesize existentialism and Marxism; he denied that he was an existentialist, and he polemicized strongly *against* Marxism (being influenced in this regard by Nicola Chiaromonte and Andrea Caffi). *The Rebel* was an *attack* on the Marxist faith, and it was not long after its publication that Sartre broke off with Camus. As for Sartre, his *What Is Literature?* was a call to writers to *stop* thinking of aesthetic values and to commit themselves politically; in it, Sartre asked writers *not* to be independent of political prescriptions.

Sartre and Camus were both great writers, and I was friendly to both of them; but they were not both urging the same doctrine. In fact, they were ideological opponents, from 1950 until Camus's death. Indeed, what is most strange is that in Frank's 1956 essay, which he is here defending, he criticized in Trilling precisely what Sartre had criticized in Camus: the idea, held by both Camus and Trilling, that politics should not be pursued as the all-important ideal objective. If Trilling at times exhibited and even preached a kind of political quietism, so did Camus, who argued that all politics can accomplish is to clean up the kitchen, it cannot tell us how to live. Sartre, by contrast, was telling his readers how to live, how to think, and how to write politically even when not writing about politics.

In his explanation, Frank makes it appear that civilized Europeans, in a unified trend represented by Sartre and Camus alike, were scandalized by the particular political course being taken by the U.S. That may have been true of Sartre, who in 1954 called America fascist; but, again, it does not hold for Camus, who opposed Sartre, and with whose views I believe Trilling was largely in agreement. Against Frank's lineup of Sartre, Camus, and civilized Europeans generally opposed to the U.S. and those of its intellectuals who had not devoted themselves to the defeat of McCarthyism, I suggest that it would be more in accordance with actual fact to set up a different division of forces and persons. On one side there were the USSR, the Communist party, and its supporters, including Sartre and his colleagues on *Les Temps Modernes*, which as late as 1950 had ad-

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vised voters to support the French Communist party's candidates in the elections. On the other side we may place the anti-Communist Camus alongside Lionel Trilling.

THE misstatements and confusions in Frank's explanation of his essay have led me to read the original text much less sympathetically than when I first saw it in 1956. And the essay itself contains statements I find I must criticize.

Take, for example, Frank's assertion that Trilling has a tendency to ". . . identify all forms of being in which the will is absent or quiescent with the ideal values of the aesthetic attitude." It is this aestheticism that has led Trilling, Frank concludes, ". . . by a devious path, to end up in justifying a good many of the degrading objects of the social world which the will had once been required to shun and to despise."

Just what are the "degrading objects of the social world" which Trilling ended up by justifying, objects which "the will had once been required to shun and to despise"? Perhaps Frank has in mind, as one of these objects, the investigations of the congressional committee on un-American activities, but in that case he should have adduced some evidence to show that Trilling had justified its practices. To my knowledge there is nothing to suggest he did. Perhaps Frank has in mind Trilling's candid acceptance of certain social conventions, which out-and-out bohemians might regard as philistine—in which case Frank should have stated just what these "degrading" conventions are, and also numbered himself among the bohemians who have rejected them. Frank makes a charge that is as serious as it is unspecific, leaving his readers to conjecture about whatever "degrading objects of the social world" they might like to think that Trilling justified. Here I believe Frank has joined in his judgment the two extremes of bad criticism, saying much too much and not nearly enough.

When I first read Joseph Frank's essay I thought he had made a devastating attack on Trilling's "Wordsworth and the Rabbis," an essay included in *The Opposing Self*. Here is Frank:

> Whatever one may say about the feelings depicted in the lines from "Tintern Abbey," it is obvious that they have little to do with the routine trivialities of modern middle-class life. . . . [B]y lumping Wordsworth's "beatitude" with Eliot's "the common routine," Trilling is being false to the spirit of Wordsworth; but even more, he is trying to make us believe that a passive acceptance of social convention is on the same level of spiritual dignity as the quasi-mystic experience of Wordsworth.

Today I ask: is that what Trilling was trying to make us believe? Alerted to the political bias underlying Frank's argument in his own account of how he came to write his essay, I have looked carefully into Trilling's "Wordsworth and the Rabbis," and, behold, what Frank saw is not there at all.

Nowhere in his essay does Trilling equate the mundane routine of middle-class life with the beatitudes of Wordsworth. What he does say is that there is an important value in the common routine which T.S. Eliot, in his play *The Cocktail Party*, ignored. He says that in that play Eliot failed to conceive the actuality of ordinary life. I quote from Trilling:

> This failure to conceive the actuality of the life of common routine is typical of modern literature since, say, Tolstoy. I do not say this to suggest that domestic life, the common routine, makes an especially appropriate subject for literature—I don't think it does—but in order to suggest a limitation of our conception of the spiritual life. . . . We imagine, with nothing in between, the dull not-being of life, the intense not-being of death; but we do not imagine being—we do not imagine that it can be joy. We are in love, at least in our literature, with the fantasy of death. Death and suffering, when we read, are our only means of conceiving the actuality of life.

Trilling is making an important point here, but it is a very different point from the one Frank claims he made. He is not asking writers falsely to embellish the actualities of ordinary life, nor is he claiming there is a good in it which is in fact not there. He is asking that whatever is good in ordinary life be represented in our literature (and he finds something of it represented in Joyce's *Ulysses*).

But what has any of this to do with Wordsworth, who managed to have experiences the ordinary man does not have? There is this, Frank claims: Trilling's liking for Wordsworth, specifically for Wordsworth's yielding to the forces of nature, somehow justifies (in Trilling's eyes) *our* yielding to the socially given, and our being social, as distinct from mystical, quietists.

I myself see no ground for thinking that in praising Wordsworth's experience of nature Trilling was defending the norms of middle-class life, and I cannot accept Frank's reading here. What can the boring problems of middle-class life, of dealing with nagging spouses and disobedient children, of getting jobs and paying debts, have to do with the high spirituality of the poet who told us that "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers"? There is nothing to praise, morally, in anyone's, even Wordsworth's, mystical contact with nature, and Trilling in his praise of Wordsworth has simply put moral judgment in parentheses. But he is thinking entirely in moral terms when he recommends an acceptance of the socially given. One may judge that he was mistaken or correct in taking this attitude, but I see no ground or evidence for connecting his view of middle-class life with his praise of Wordsworth.

For what it is worth, I believe that Trilling in

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his own life wanted to be even more bourgeois —taking the term in its social, not in its political, sense—than it is possible for an American in this century to be. He longed for the elaborate style of bourgeois life which the British and the French had developed, which so many French writers attacked, and which Americans who have not lived abroad hardly know at all. But this taste of his implied nothing in the way of a commitment to any particular social policy or socio-economic system—something his left-wing critics have never understood.

The important point Trilling is making, and which Frank has missed entirely, is this: whatever value there may be in any escape from or transcendence of the actualities of ordinary life will finally depend on there being *some unimpeachable value in ordinary life itself*. And I think this view, an extremely subtle one, which Trilling himself associates with the ancient rabbis, is completely right.

IN DEFENDING Trilling's contention that there is "joy" in ordinary experience I am not implying, of course, a defense of every literary judgment he made. For instance, I do not agree with his negative judgment of Dreiser's work. But unlike Frank I do not think his error here a morally philistine one; he was mistaken, as the best of critics have been. And rereading Trilling's deliberately controversial essay on the American realist novelist William Dean Howells, also included in *The Opposing Self*, I could not but smile at the snare it seems to me he was setting for unwary critics, and I could not but wonder how it was that Joseph Frank, who must have known he was being led on, could so blunder, and fall into it. Clearly Trilling, in praising Howells, was looking toward some denunciation of his judgment by critics who did not understand it, or his motive for stating and defending it; so the indignant Frank provided him with just the kind of attack he may have wished and must have relished. For there is an ironic pleasure to be had in arousing an indignation one knows is quite mistaken.

Did Trilling in fact overpraise Howells, as Frank charges? He called the novelist an "engaging" writer, comparing him with, but placing him well below, Trollope. Did not Trilling note that Howells was not "intelligent" in his attitude toward creative invention in fiction, relying stupidly on his peculiar notions of realism? Trilling does indeed praise Howells for his creation of character; perhaps there is some overestimation here, but surely nothing to elicit *moral* indignation. Apparently what makes Joseph Frank wrathful is a judgment I find quite unobjectionable, namely, Trilling's commendation of Howells for making the middle-class family the center of his spiritual concerns, as well as Trilling's daring to suggest that Howells knew something about the antagonism between spirit and the circumstances which may condition it, even as did Donne, Pascal, and Tolstoy. This brings down on the critic the sermonizing he may well have desired. Frank writes:

> [T]his invocation of Donne, Pascal, and Tolstoy is unexpected, to say the least. What has Howells to do with Donne's conflict between a skeptical sensuality and a passionate religiosity? With Pascal's conflict between the impasses of reason and the eternal silence of the infinite spaces? With Tolstoy's titanic search for the meaning of history, and his anguished struggle to reconcile the abundance of life with the gnawing awareness of physical death?

But these questions, put so rhetorically by Frank, are so much hapless rodomontade. Frank, thrice wrong, is saying three times that he is right. Trilling is comparing Howells to Donne, Pascal, and Tolstoy with respect to the *nature*, not the *depth*, of his concerns. All Trilling says of Howells is that he had an interest in whatever conditions the spirit, as did the three Europeans. To be sure, Donne, Pascal, and Tolstoy were interested in all sorts of things which could not possibly have interested Howells. But the poet who wrote, "I can love any so she love not me"; the mathematician and philosopher who warned against revolution, since it was very likely to make one long for the *ancien régime*; the novelist who so loved family life yet was alert to its tragic side—all were interested in the actualities which condition and limit our spiritual endeavors. To say these many-sided geniuses were like Howells in one respect, and that perhaps the only respect in which he counts at all, is not to diminish their stature, or to enlarge that of Howells.

NOW there are other criticisms of Trilling in Frank's essay besides the political thrust with which I have dealt so far; Frank had some purely intellectual objections to Trilling's writings which do not have to be answered politically. But I believe those critics who disagreed with Trilling politically, and have praised Frank's essay, commend it in order to bolster the positions they defend. Thus Irving Howe in *A Margin of Hope*:

> Trilling, said Frank, attacked "the liberal imagination" on the ground that most liberals assumed the complexities of reality could be adequately apprehended through the categories of politics. "Only literature, Trilling argued"—I quote again from Frank—"could truly cope with the intricacies of the moral life; and he recommended that politics appropriate for itself some of the suppleness of literature." Then came Frank's final thrust: "It is hardly necesary to say that no such . . . politics has ever existed —or ever will exist. . . . No political ideology of any kind can compete with literature in the delicacy of its reaction to human experience."

Irving Howe approves, but of course he wants to approve. He does not want to think about the

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matter. Otherwise he would have noted that Frank has set up a straw man to demolish. For in Frank's quotations from Trilling it nowhere appears that Trilling said politics could compete with literature in suppleness, delicacy, or anything else. Trilling was dealing with a different fact of life, which in his own way, and in a different context, Harold Rosenberg once documented: namely, that in modern times, politics has set out to compete with literature. It is not so easy to answer what intellectuals must do about this, but all Trilling argued for was that politics take in *some* of the suppleness we had come to expect from literature. "Unless we insist that politics is imagination and mind," Trilling declared in *The Liberal Imagination*, "we will learn that imagination and mind are politics, and of a kind we will not like." He clearly was thinking of Communist politics.

Here I want to go back to one statement of Frank's which Howe should have challenged radically. The statement is: ". . . no such . . . politics has ever existed—or ever will exist." I want to know, no such politics as—what? No politics equal to literature in suppleness? But Trilling was not suggesting there has been any such thing. What about a politics with *some* of the qualities we appreciate in imaginative literature? That is in fact, as I have noted, what Trilling was asking for, and that has existed and I am certain will exist again.

Examples abound. Did not Jefferson declare that the thirteen colonies could not continue under British rule because the bond of feeling had been broken by the acts of George III? Can one easily distinguish this statement as a purely political and not at all a literary one? When Napoleon wrote the code under which most Europeans would live for the rest of the century, and whose prose Stendhal would imitate in his novels, did he not in imagination conceive of under what laws the people of France and Europe wanted to live, very much as Balzac had to imagine the kind of fiction his audience of that time wanted to read? The fact that no Soviet political thinker has made any effort analogous to Napoleon's is one of the things from which Soviet citizens suffer, and will continue to suffer until some imagination is expressed in Soviet social policy; and it may be safely said that this cannot happen as long as imagination is not welcomed in Soviet literature. The politics which, Frank writes, has never existed and cannot exist has existed and will exist again. We saw an aspect of it in Solidarity; and if we do not see more, life in Eastern Europe will continue to be unlivable.

AT THIS point someone may ask, wasn't Frank right in any of his criticisms? How is it then that "Lionel Trilling and the Conservative Imagination" has steadily acquired such a reputation, so that any serious criticism of Trilling has to refer to it or deal with it? My answer is this: first of all, nobody else writing on Trilling took up fundamental issues as Joseph Frank did, and it required courage for him to write as he did at the time he did. This does not mean, however, that for all his seriousness he was right in his judgments. But wasn't he right on anything? There are two criticisms Frank made of Trilling about which he may have been right; when I first read Frank's essay I thought him completely right on these two points. Today I am less sure.

The first point on which Frank may have been right is this: Trilling claimed that in Hegel he could find justification for making the aesthetic the criterion of the moral. And Frank contested this judgment. In fact, it is not utterly clear to me that Frank is right, though I am going to concede the point to him. The reason I think the matter unclear is that Hegel never laid great store by ethics. He thought ethical action consisted in upholding the laws of the community, as long as the community was stable, its government unlikely to be overthrown. In a situation such as we see in South Africa today, the ethical for Hegel would have been to support the laws if one thought the South African government stable, and able to defeat attacks on it, but to resist the government if one thought there were some real likelihood it could be overthrown.

Now such a view of the ethical is not as opposed as Frank thinks to the notion that the aesthetic may be a criterion of the ethical, a view Trilling deduced from Hegel's remarks on personality. It was *possible* for Hegel to think this way, while a real ethicist could not. I would argue, too, that by "criterion," Trilling may have meant "symptom," in which case I could agree with his judgment. The two terms, we have learned from Wittgenstein, are easily confused. But I am going to grant this point against Trilling to his most serious critic.

The other point has to do with Trilling's belief that the conscience is buttressed by ego strength, which is often (would he have said, always?) based on biology. Frank writes:

> It is difficult to comprehend how someone as intelligent and perceptive as Lionel Trilling should not have understood that "martyrs of the intellect" died for an ideal of "truth" that could hardly have been derived solely from their biological existence. Indeed, I find it slightly repellent even to speak of "immutable biological facts" . . . as if all treasures of the human capacity for heroism, self-sacrifice, and supreme dedication to a moral ideal—as if all the values that Trilling himself is actually urging us to admire—could be reduced to the sum total of a few instinctual drives.

This point I cannot, on reflection, grant altogether. For Frank has slanted Trilling's notion of the biological so as to make it seem that Trilling said something much more objectionable than he did. There is all the difference in the world

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between saying that Freud, or Giordano Bruno for that matter, was capable of intellectual heroism because of his ego strength (which had a biological basis), and saying that heroism for the truth can be reduced to a few instinctual drives. Yet I am going to allow this criticism of Trilling, too, and not try to look behind it.

But there have been critics of Trilling to whom I feel no obligation to concede anything whatsoever.

Surely I need concede nothing to the very poor critique of Trilling made by the poet Delmore Schwartz in his 1953 essay, "The Duchess's Red Shoes," reprinted in his *Selected Essays*. Schwartz criticized the emphasis Trilling placed on manners, first in the novel and then in moral life. He made the point that manners are hardly important in the greatest of novels, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and have as little importance in *Moby-Dick*. And he suggested that often there are conflicts between the values of being moral and of being mannerly, bringing up Proust's account in *Remembrance of Things Past* of the difficult moment when Swann tells the Duchess he is dying and she responds by denying that he is and allows herself to be taken off to a party by the Duke. Schwartz interprets the incident thus: manners required the Duchess to attend the party, and appear there promptly; morals required her to be late to the party or not go at all, and instead spend some time with her friend.

But this is a point which Trilling or Proust—both admirers of Dostoevsky, by the way—might have judged differently from Schwartz. They might have thought it *unmannerly* for the Duchess to take leave of her friend. (This she did because of the Duke, who did not even care about being late to the party, but insisted that she change her shoes.) In any case, some things may be much more important than manners, but to say this does not tell us just what importance manners have.

I am reminded of a question I put to a friend who had just returned from a visit to Poland. He spoke the language, and so I felt I could trust his judgment of social life in that country. He said to me, "You should visit Poland, too," mentioning that Saul Bellow had been there. I then asked him: "If one can speak Polish, how long would one have to live in Poland, have social relations with Poles, and not make a faux pas?" I was horrified when he said that one week would be quite sufficient—for in Paris one can live for ten years, speak perfect French, and still be guilty of a social gaffe. So if after a week's stay in Poland one can be perfectly at ease when with others, we may conclude that Poland's has not been a truly human society at least since the advent of Communism.

Noting that manners are not important in *The Brothers Karamazov,* Delmore Schwartz failed to notice how important religious values are in the novel. Now Lionel Trilling was both without serious interest in religious values and critical of them, which should have been taken into account by Schwartz. In what society were manners most important? In China, whose people for the most part never knew the worship of a transcendent God.

Robert Boyers is another critic who, for all his praise of Trilling in the little book he devotes to him, has sharply questioned the fundamental attitudes Trilling took. This appears in Boyers's examination of a very interesting short story by Trilling, "Of This Time, Of That Place," which is about the relations of a professor named Joseph Howe with a bright but mentally deranged student whom he tries to help.

Boyers's strictures have to do with the notion of tragedy which so interested Trilling (Boyers does not even inquire as to the reasons for that interest). But his criticism amounts to a charge of cowardice against Trilling, who, claims Boyers, wanted to grant a certain tragic pathos to the professor but should really have brought out the tragic quality in the student, Tertan, who is initially described as having something heroic about him; instead, Howe in the end leaves the student to the mercies of the dean, reasoning that the boy is "certifiably mad." "What is unsatisfactory," Boyers writes, "is Trilling's attempt to claim for Howe a stature to which he is definitely not entitled." And Boyers makes it quite clear that Trilling is not entitled to such stature, either.

Yet elsewhere in his discussion Boyers contradicts himself, as writers tend to do when out of their depth. He asserts:

> [I]f Trilling had wanted to confer a kind of tragic stature upon Howe, he would also have had to consider the relation between tragic character and social convention. Nowhere in his commentary does he make an effort to do so.

Then perhaps Trilling did not want to confer tragic stature on Howe? What *did* he mean to do in his story?

Boyers makes the point that the teacher, Howe, does not have the "courage to undertake further elusive intercourse with the afflicted" Tertan. "Freud," Boyers writes, "would not have turned away so readily from Tertan, had the young man been his patient. . . ." Now this is monstrously unjust. A doctor, especially a therapist for mental troubles, could hardly turn away from a patient—by whom, incidentally, he is paid, as Freud always insisted analysts must be—without incurring the stigma of unprofessional behavior. But it is not part of the professional duty of any teacher of literature to help the mentally deranged, since a teacher is not equipped to do this.

Looking at Trilling's story again I should say that Professor Joseph Howe's place in the dramatic events is like that of the chorus in a Greek

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tragedy. He urges moderation on the two student protagonists, Tertan and Blackburn, both of whom are mad, and this is all the chorus does in Greek tragedy. But even that is only possible with protagonists who are sane. It is hard enough to argue with Antigone, Philoctetes, and Oedipus, who are presented as sane; were they mad, it would be comical to urge moderation on them. Madness places the protagonist in a different world, one which the words of the chorus cannot reach. And Trilling understood perfectly well that the professor, Joseph Howe, is the chorus, or, as Schiller put it, the audience on stage.

What is characteristic of the two mad students, Tertan and Blackburn, is that they both suffer from hubris. The professor recognizes this about both students, but he laments the hubris of Tertan while he is repelled by that of Blackburn, who for all his faults is going to escape tragic destruction. In my reading of Trilling's story I do not find anything whatsoever to indicate that he wanted to give an aura of tragedy to the professor. The man is presented as moderate, perhaps even marginal in the world of letters, worried about holding his job and making his literary reputation more solid. He is not said to be a hero, and (to quote Eliot) "was not meant to be." Joseph Howe, like Prufrock, is not going to disturb the universe. But there is nothing he can do further for the mad student Tertan; of his feeling about this, as a reader of the story, I am convinced. I myself find that it is almost impossible to be interested in another person once I come to think of him as mad. Trilling puts it very well: what was a person has become a fact.

So Boyers's reading is wrong—and utterly political. The "conservative imagination," which, having read Joseph Frank's essay, he sees in the character of Joseph Howe, is what accounts for the teacher's inability to help the mad student Tertan, and this, says Boyers, is disappointing. It does not disappoint me. For the life of me I do not see how any teacher could have helped the student. Even Freud, whom Boyers invokes, admitted he could not help the insane.

If Boyers's critique is absurd, all the same it does have a certain heuristic value for me, for it has led me to want to formulate one aspect of Trilling's contribution to American literary thinking. It is my notion that Trilling's critical writings, with their blend of the moral, the literary, and the political, were centered on a *critique of hubris* in modernist literature, in left-wing politics, and more generally in the moral life. I am tempted even to deny that he was a conservative in any political sense; I think he would have attacked the hubris of conservative politics had he noted it dangerously in those quarters.*

But if Trilling attacked hubris for the most part in left-wing politics and in modernist literature, that is where hubris is for the most part to be found. Who but a modernist like Joyce would have spent seventeen years writing a novel, *Finnegans Wake*, which, he admitted, it might take as many years for his audience to read? Even such modernists as Pound and Eliot disapproved of *Finnegans Wake*, though not publicly; it is, of course, full of wonderful prose, but only a critic committed not only to modernism but to modernist hubris can fully approve it.

Trilling told us candidly that Baudelaire and Rimbaud were not his favorite writers. Now the contemporary French poet Yves Bonnefoy—it has been said that he is all that is left of French literature—has claimed, in an otherwise excellent essay on Rimbaud, that Rimbaud's message, and Baudelaire's, to contemporary poets is to live divine lives *without believing in God*. I hardly think hubris, and a hubris based on reflection, could go farther.

As to leftism, in Trilling's time and today it has always been accusatory and almost always wrong: wrong about our sending military aid to Greece, wrong about Korea, wrong about El Salvador, wrong about the missile crisis, wrong in promoting a hysteria over Watergate which made U.S. foreign policy impotent for years. With all these errors behind it the Left has learned not even one lesson in modesty. It is not possible to atone for many years of supporting the Soviet Union by saying that one is critical today of its policies. I think there was less hubris in the old Trotskyist Left, which at least understood that the only way to atone for having backed the Soviet state was to call for and conspire toward its overthrow. Our milktoast leftists around *Dissent*, the quarterly edited by Irving Howe, will not even permit themselves to call for the overthrow of the Soviet fiefdom in Nicaragua. But their pretensions to political virtue are constant, and they advance their weak political notions with the strongest abuse of their adversaries.

Trilling's criticism of hubris appears in those of his essays which have been most criticized, and are among his best, like his essays on Jane Austen's *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* and Henry James's *The Bostonians*, pieces in which he is said to have yielded to the promptings of the conservative imagination. Joseph Frank, in making this charge, goes even farther. He writes: "It is one of the paradoxes of his [Trilling's] position that his aversion to the apocalyptic and charismatic, instead of causing him to reprobate extremism in any form, should simply have driven him to adopt the alternative extreme himself." Or, to put it in my terms, Trilling was himself guilty of hubris.

* Did Norman Podhoretz criticize Trilling's politics in *Breaking Ranks* because he felt Trilling would have attacked positions he himself accepted? Podhoretz denies this, but still I wonder. Interestingly, anti-conservative critics sometimes praise Trilling in order to attack Podhoretz; witness Robert Boyers's review of Mark Krupnick's book on Trilling in the New York *Times Book Review*, and for that matter the book itself.

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I do not think so, for I deny the notion on which the charge rests, that Trilling was, in Frank's phrase, a "spokesman of the conservative imagination." The charge is a political one, but there is no party of the conservative imagination, as there is no party of anti-hubris. I think Trilling was the spokesman for his own views, his own fears, hopes, and valuations; that these did not always coincide with those of radicals or liberals does not mean Trilling was committed to some other cause, and an extremist cause at that.

I believe that Frank's criticisms, many of which I have already indicated are invalid when not quite beside the point, are fundamentally political. Now Joseph Frank is not a writer who often expresses himself politically. I think this most unfortunate. People who hold political views but only infrequently express them in writing often lose a clear sense of what their political views are. I have friends who support the political views expressed in *Dissent*, by which I am nowadays scandalized, simply because they do not want to take the trouble to state—this might also require them to defend—their own opinions. And I think Joseph Frank in his essay on Trilling made himself the spokesman for political views whose bias, clear to others, he did not undertake thoroughly to understand and which, if stated clearly, he might be reluctant to defend.

All in all, Frank's essay, together with the support of it by critics who have praised it, constitutes to my mind a telling argument for Trilling's thesis that liberals will do almost anything in preference to taking a clear stand—by which I mean something more than rhetoric—against political radicalism. Perhaps Trilling thought—I myself thought this at the time—that while McCarthy would go, the Communists would still be with us. And is it not a fact that this very essay by Joseph Frank, written after McCarthy had been driven from the scene, is itself an effort to restate the issue of McCarthyism as *the* moral and political issue of the period? There is a kind of liberal who will still today insist that McCarthyism is the issue even now.

BUT my subject is Lionel Trilling and his critics, not his critics and Lionel Trilling, and I realize that I have not said nearly enough about Trilling's character and predilections, or about what his contribution to our criticism has been. Evidently, when you undertake to defend someone you cannot always keep him in sight; you are too occupied studying his opponents. But I hope I have cleared away enough of the graffiti clustered around Trilling's figure so that the man and the work can be seen more plainly.

I think I can say of him something akin to what he said of Wordsworth—and which his critics have not noticed. Trilling praised Wordsworth for always maintaining an interest in politics; this was true of Trilling, too. But what animated him most of all was a love of literature unusual even among literary critics; thus his judgment of literary works was never subverted by political, theoretical, or ideological considerations. He was that rare kind of critic: incapable of saying he liked what he disliked. And this love of literature—not just for itself, but for what it shows the human mind to be capable of—made him attentive to the work of beginners who showed even the slightest talent.

He was, moreover, generous to a fault. Robert Warshow wrote a devastating critique of Trilling's novel, *The Middle of the Journey*, but this did not keep Trilling from writing an admiring introduction to Warshow's book of essays, *The Immediate Experience*. And esteeming, as he did, Harold Rosenberg's *Tradition of the New*, he overlooked some catty remarks made about him by Rosenberg in one of the latter's essays. Not, however, what Howe wrote of him in "This Age of Conformity": Trilling could tell the difference between a criticism that was sincere and might even be justified, and one that was politically motivated.

In his own criticism Trilling exhibited a gentle strength of thought capable of registering faithfully the harshness of real facts. He notes, for instance, about James's *The Bostonians* that feminism is unlike any other political extremism, and also more radical, for it assails the relations of the sexes, and no one can foresee where this may lead. Now this is a judgment which other critics of James's work might well have made, but none did; I could almost say it is a judgment they took great care not to make. Of course, in great criticism, as in all art, there has to be a certain daring, and such daring, for all his gentility, was not lacking in Lionel Trilling.

Was he objective in his literary judgments? This is a difficult question, and in response I should rely on a valuable point made by the English philosopher Roger Scruton, who has written two interesting books on aesthetics. Scruton tells us that just as there are primary qualities in things (size, weight) which can be measured, and secondary qualities (scent, taste) which cannot, so there are in works of art and literature what he calls tertiary qualities, such as irony and elegance, which are even less capable of measurement.

Irony and elegance are indeed hardly measureable. Yet it is qualities of this kind that enter most importantly into our literary judgments, and it is with just such tertiary qualities that Trilling's criticism is in the main concerned. But if these qualities are hardly susceptible of measurement, then those who can discern them, and who value them, must probably constitute an elite; and may not an elite of this sort be an expression of, and a force for, conservatism? Perhaps. In this restricted and nonpolitical sense Trilling was certainly a conservative, as any true critic of literature must be.

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Nicaraguan Journey

Stephen Schwartz

I ARRIVED in Nicaragua early in July, at the height of the recent round of confrontations between the Sandinistas and the country's internal opposition. A week before, *La Prensa,* Nicaragua's leading newspaper, had been closed, and one of the "turbulent priests," Father Bismarck Carballo, spokesman for the nation's Conference of Bishops, then traveling in the United States, had been refused permission to return to the country. On July 3, the day before I arrived, Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega was deported to Honduras.

For those with eyes to see, Nicaragua is not an inspiring example of revolution in action. But of course one important problem is that many if not all of the "revolutionary tourists" who visit the country—and it is said that there are now 40,000 U.S. "friendship delegates" there, not to mention all those from other Western countries —lack eyes to see, as well as lacking enough Spanish to hear and understand what the people feel (I mean the real people, not the Sandinista *comandantes*). And, more disturbingly, the same seems to be true of the many American and other foreign journalists on the scene.

There are two Managuas—the Managua of the workers and peasants, and the Managua of the bureaucrats and foreign "groupies." Residents of the former Managua must spend hours in line at a *supermercado del pueblo,* or searching through the private markets, hunting for scarce staple items, while residents of the latter feast on lobster at $6.00 a plate in the Hotel Intercontinental. Generally, where one sees Nicaraguans out of uniform, or Nicaraguans without briefcases (the classic symbol of Leninist power), one sees no foreigners, and vice versa.

The division between the two worlds begins at the customs gate. The luggage of visiting Americans is left alone, or only cursorily examined, while packages brought in by Nicaraguans of all classes are broken open, inspected, and, in many cases, confiscated. This was my first opportunity to experience the rather fearless grumbling that Nicaraguans carry on daily; one woman whose goods were confiscated complained loudly that foreign tourists can do anything, but Nicaraguans themselves have no rights. Another individual, awaiting his turn in the lines, commented bitterly on "*la burocracia.*" This is a new word for Nicaraguans; some pronounce it incorrectly, with an accent on the *i.*

I spent four hours one Saturday walking patiently through the Mercado Oriental, the main private market in the city. (From now on I intend to ask bright-eyed leftists who speak enthusiastically about their experiences in Nicaragua if they can describe for me how to get to the Mercado Oriental.) The Mercado Oriental is a classic market of the Mediterranean type, sprawling across about four square blocks. The day I visited, however, only about half the space seemed to be in use. The low level of activity, visible immediately, contrasted markedly with market Saturdays I had seen in Mexico, the Philippines, and Spain. The reason was strikingly obvious: there was very little to sell or to buy.

I went from stand to stand, backward and forward through the market, retracing my steps in the narrow corridors. Finally, I sat down and wrote in my notebook the sum total of items for sale on this bright Saturday. At about ten stands, fish and shellfish. At about a dozen others (two or three for each item), some fried pork, some tortillas, some bread, yucca, plantains. At one or two stands, some beans and some onions, and at a few others, low-quality clothing and shoes, much of it plainly homemade from castoff materials. Finally, some ice cream, soft drinks, and beer. Nothing in plenitude, and everything highly priced. A small plate of fried pork sold for 200 cordobas; the daily wage is 500. Meat had been reported to be generally absent from the markets for about a month. Fish from the country's two huge lakes seems to be keeping the people alive.

In a *supermercado del pueblo* a few blocks away, the offerings were not much better. There was some ground coffee, some butter (put up in plastic bags), a great deal of unsold vinegar, unsold steak sauce, unsold mustard and ketchup, unsold drinking glasses, health drinks made out of wheat and put up in large cans (imported from the People's Republic of China), various cleaning

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fluids that would be good for use on linoleum but devastating if one attempted to substitute them for the ever-absent hand soap, and, in the meat coolers, brooms and mops. There was also some shoe polish.

I should add two additional details: in the Mercado Oriental, I listened for some time to a man discoursing on cats and how to eat them. The absence of songbirds in Managua, a hot and tropical city, was similarly explained: the people have eaten them.

Who is to blame? A better question would be, *cui bono*, or who benefits? The Sandinista elite and its courtesans insist that the U.S. and the *contras* are responsible for the growing scarcity and hunger. Stephen Kinzer, a facile reporter for the New York *Times*, admits in a typical dispatch (July 14) that "many Nicaraguans say they believe mismanagement and inefficiency are responsible for some shortages," but then he turns to the favored explanation. *Comandante* Jaime Wheelock, for example, states that in its current war situation, the country has no money for "development"—as if providing people with staples were an item for development investment rather than a simple daily necessity. Kinzer himself adds a labored explanation having to do with the lack of foreign exchange—as if Nicaragua had ever before had to purchase rice, beans, potatoes, meat, or cooking oil abroad. Perhaps the simplest alibi would be the best—the *contras* came one night and destroyed all the staples in the country.

Unfortunately, the truth is obvious: thanks to confiscatory taxation, the first share of all wealth goes to the party and police (the latter, designated as "armed formations of the interior ministry," highly visible in a special blue uniform), the second share goes to the army, the third to the foreign "revolutionary tourists" with dollars, and the last to the people themselves. The real Nicaraguans are living in a barter economy. As in most Leninist systems, there is no incentive for the peasants to grow and sell their produce. Anyone tempted to blame this on the war should look at a similar conflict, the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39; there, notwithstanding political problems and Communist influence, and aside from the case of besieged Madrid, most of the Republican side ate reasonably well throughout the conflict, for the simple reason that the Catalan and Valencian peasantry supported the cause of anti-fascist defense. In Nicaragua, there is a sense that the great majority of the peasants support the *contras*.

YET the most soul-destroying aspect of the scene is not the terrible scarcity in the markets but the opulence in which the *comandantes* and their foreign associates live. To be sure, in the Hotel Intercontinental there are also shortages: many items appearing on the menu are not available; one evening there is chicken, but only deep-fried; another evening there are no salads. Still, life is easy for those armed with dollars, particularly foreign news people and visiting radicals.

Some other details from life in the Hotel Intercontinental: in the hotel bookstore one can purchase Muammar Qaddafi's *Green Book*, and American Trotskyite publications, but no editions of the poetry of Ruben Dario, the Nicaraguan national poet and one of the greatest modern poets in Spanish. Nicaragua does, unlike Cuba, continue to produce good medium-priced cigars, hand-rolled (the Cuban production today, aside from the very top quality, is machine-rolled); but these, again, are to be found only in the hotels and tourist "dollar shops."

And there are begging children, exactly as in other impoverished countries, but with significant differences. These children by and large stay away from foreigners; one has the impression that they have heard too many lectures from the revolutionary tourists and the East-bloc advisers. The one place they approached me was in the ruins of the Managua cathedral, as if they knew that only someone who would visit a church would give them something. They asked me for "*un pecho*," a coin, explaining that they wanted it "to eat."

Watching the comportment of the *comandantes* and the American leftist visitors, I found myself recalling a set of lines by the American poet Philip Lamantia:

> You can not close
> You can not open
> You break yr head
> You make bloody bread!

2.

IT TOOK quite an effort to find a map of Nicaragua, and when I finally obtained one I had to pay three U.S. dollars for it. And then I discovered that Santo Domingo de las Sierritas, a small hamlet outside Managua where I wanted to go, was not shown on it; to locate the village I had to find a map dating from the Somoza period. The apparent reason is that this is where Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, the real head of the Nicaraguan opposition, serves mass every Sunday.

I went to mass at Santo Domingo de las Sierritas on July 6, the Sunday following the expulsion of Bishop Vega. In the end, it was not difficult to find. A taxi driver at the hotel smiled very broadly when I asked if he could take me there; there is no other reason to go than to participate in the mass.

The little church is on a hill, surrounded by beautiful, green countryside. Peasant families come on foot, throughout the morning, to attend mass. At the church I met the leaders of the genuine opposition parties—the Social Christians,

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Social Democrats, Conservatives, and Independent Liberals—who had come to offer solidarity with the Church in its hour of struggle. (I say the "genuine" opposition parties in contradistinction to the tame opposition parties that are pledged to support the Sandinistas.)

The mass itself was an emotional and very educational experience. To begin with, although the Cardinal is often painted in the U.S. press as an inveterate conservative and ally of the privileged classes, the majority of those at his mass were humble people, peasants and workers. Furthermore, the service itself was a "Latino" affair, with electric guitars, the singing of Protestant as well as Catholic hymns, and no Latin in the liturgy. The entire ceremony, however, was suffused with a sense of resistance. Both the entrance of Cardinal Obando y Bravo to the altar and the several mentions of the names of Father Carballo and Bishop Vega were greeted with applause. The readings included the epistle of Paul from imprisonment, the book of Isaiah, and, most affectingly, the third Psalm, beginning,

> Oh Lord, how powerful are my enemies!

and concluding,

> You will break the teeth of my enemies. . . .

Each line of this first Davidic Psalm was read by Cardinal Obando y Bravo, and then repeated by the congregation. It occurred to me that there was a possible subtext to this selection, which is David's lament when surrounded by the forces of his rebellious son Absalom. It would be understandable that Cardinal Obando y Bravo should view the Sandinistas as his rebellious children, for, notwithstanding the propaganda against him and his bishops circulated in the U.S. and elsewhere, the truth is that the Cardinal had always been on the anti-Somoza side and even a supporter of the Sandinista rebellion. Indeed, Somoza had referred to him as "Comrade Miguel" because of his many gestures in defense of such Somoza-era prisoners as Tomás Borge, the present-day head of State Security. (The now-expelled Bishop Vega, by the way, Somoza had called the "red bishop.")

As the mass drew to its close, the congregation sang two beautiful hymns: one, to the Virgin Mary, with a chorus "*se salve, se salve Nicaragua*," and another, repeating "*in our land, on our soil . . . long live Nicaragua, long live Nicaragua.*" Outside, a busload of Sandinista soldiers had earlier passed by slowly, as if to remind the congregation of the dangers they faced. But they, and the opposition leaders who had come to join them, were evidently willing to brave these dangers, no doubt strengthened by the severity and power of the Cardinal. He is a man who, as Nicaraguans say, looks more like a soldier than a priest.

Late in the service, a message was read from the Pope, who was then visiting Colombia, expressing his dismay at the attacks on Father Carballo and Bishop Vega. And for his part, President Daniel Ortega found himself moved to comment on the situation that same weekend at one of the secular observances with which the Sandinistas would like to replace the Catholic mass as a communications event. This was one of the "face the people" (*De Cara al Pueblo*) sessions, held in Esteli, a provincial city, where Ortega, in his curiously-accented Spanish, soft-pedaled the repression before an audience which, at least from the newscast I saw, seemed made up more of foreigners than of Nicaraguans. I do not claim a native's command of Spanish, or status as an expert on dialects, but I found Ortega's manner of speaking very hard to follow. A Nicaraguan friend who was also watching told me that since they came back from Cuba after the Sandinista seizure of power, the Ortega brothers and Tomás Borge have affected the mannerisms, gestures, and even the accent, of Fidel Castro.

While speaking with members of the opposition, I identified myself as a Jew, which called forth interesting reactions. First, praise of the Jews for belonging to a religion that defended traditional values against Communism. Second, comments on Pope John Paul II's ecumenical visit to a Rome synagogue some months previous. Finally, there were jokes about my being the only Jew left in Nicaragua, and recountings of the famous attack on the Managua synagogue in 1978. Questioned about this outrage, the Sandinistas have replied that it took place while Somoza was in power, deftly skirting the issue of who carried out the assault and why. But the attack, as has recently been documented in these pages,* was mounted by Sandinista hardliners as an "anti-Zionist" act. I went by the building. Today it has been painted over with Sandinista slogans. In the doorway I saw a woman with a pistol strapped to her body.

3.

On this, my first visit to a "liberated and transformed" Nicaragua, I thought often of George Orwell's book about the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia*. I have come to the conclusion that Orwell was wrong in one detail. Orwell blamed the Communists for dragging Spain back from its revolutionary hopes to a state where fat men gorged in restaurants while children begged in the streets. But this was not a return to the bourgeois order; rather, it was an anticipation of Communism as it already existed in Russia and would have existed in Spain had the Communists seized full control of the Re-

* "Sandinista Anti-Semitism and Its Apologists" by Joshua Muravchik, Susan Alberts, and Antony Korenstein, September 1986.

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public, something they attempted but never fully achieved.

In *Homage to Catalonia,* Orwell also expressed great enthusiasm for conditions in the early, revolutionary Barcelona, where power was visibly in the hands of the working class. This, he said, was a situation clearly worth fighting for. Is there anything in "revolutionary" Managua that would sustain such a feeling? I found nothing.

One must ask, then, what other foreigners find to defend there. The answer must be, I think, nothing visible or concrete. The foreign "revolutionary tourists" who have descended on the country are perfectly satisfied with abstractions. They think in terms of "the process," not the reality of daily life. To them what counts is what is said and written by the Sandinista leadership, and nothing else. They are deaf to the cries of ordinary people like the proletarian women in the Mercado Oriental, because they will never go there.

Yet the messages conveyed by those people are unequivocal. "I tell you, all this will pass," a woman in one of the stalls in the Mercado repeated to me. Others spoke defiantly of the coming defeat of the *comandantes* and the liberation of the country. Still others told me of the eviction of peasants from their land to make way for useless, grandiose agricultural projects such as the planting of African palm trees. The dislodged peasants are grouped in settlements where they are compelled to work for subsistence rations, and are ordered to join the militia. They join *a* militia, but it is not the Sandinista army; rather, it is the *contras.*

4.

It is crass to admit it, but to fly from Nicaragua to Costa Rica (with my last glimpse of Managua a giant Aeroflot jet on the diminutive runway) is to return to the real world. Although Costa Rica's agricultural base is actually less productive than Nicaragua's, the country seems to be everything Nicaragua is not; prosperous, literate, healthy, with an extensive welfare system, it even seems to represent, in the end, an almost paradisiacal version of what all of Central America could be.

If the presence of Costa Rica on their southern border constitutes a permanent challenge to the pretensions of the Sandinistas, the people of Costa Rica, as well as the press and the government, are equally very concerned about events to their north. Much of the most important information on Nicaragua is to be gleaned from Costa Rican media. For example, the respected, conservative Costa Rican daily *La Nación,* outlining the possibility of a real famine in Nicaragua, has reported fears among the Sandinista leaders of food riots. The same paper has also reported a rush to emigrate that is now affecting even the middle ranks of the Sandinista leadership, and, most recently, the possibility that, hurt by unfavorable international publicity, the nine *comandantes* might be pondering a second round of national "elections."

This leads me to the issue of Nicaraguan opposition strategies, about which one can learn as much in Costa Rica as, perhaps, in Nicaragua.

There are several Nicaraguan oppositions. There is first of all the Church, a mighty and combative force. But it is very hard to gauge the extent to which the Nicaraguan Church can, as in Poland, take the initiative in organizing and leading the internal opposition. Certainly the Church already shows the bruises earned in prior campaigns. Nobody rejects the possibility that the Sandinistas will either expel or try Cardinal Obando y Bravo.

There is also, as I have noted, a tolerated internal opposition, consisting mainly of the Coordinadora parties: the Social Christians, the Conservatives, the Independent Liberals, and the Social Democrats. These organisms are tolerated, it seems, mainly because of their international contacts: the Social Christians with the Christian Democrats of Western Europe, for example. Their leaders today consist mostly of veterans of the anti-Somoza war. They are circumscribed, but undefeated. There seems to be a strong and authentic sentiment among these parties for closer coordination, if not for a final fusion into a single party.

Then there are the tolerated independent trade unions, such as the Confederation of Trade-Union Unification (CUS), affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and the Confederation of Nicaraguan Workers (CTN), of a Christian Democratic stripe. These bodies seem to have a higher public profile than the Coordinadora parties; one sees their flyers, for example, posted in the streets of Managua, but little or nothing from the Coordinadora parties. Ironically, the flyers issued by the independent unions make much greater use of a "class struggle" rhetoric than do the propaganda posters of the government-controlled union, the Sandinista Confederation of Workers (CST). The flyer put out by the CUS for May Day, for example, reads "Remember the Martyrs of Chicago," referring to the Haymarket bomb defendants of 1886, traditionally associated with May Day and particularly so in Spanish-speaking nations where there remains something of an anarcho-syndicalist tradition.

Aside from the tolerated internal-opposition parties and unions, there are also the groupings of what I have called the tame opposition. These are parties that profess criticism of the Sandinista government while subscribing to the Sandinista program. They include the Nicaraguan Socialist party, which was the "official" pro-Moscow Communist group for many years but has now be-

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come somewhat Eurocommunist; its candidate in the 1984 "election," Domingo Sanchez Salgado, was among those who protested the conditions of political intimidation under which the voting was carried out. Moscow itself seems rather to have turned its back on the Socialists, preferring to deal with the Sandinistas. There is also the Nicaraguan Communist party, led by one Allan Zambrana, which seems to have attracted substantial elements among younger radicals and trade unionists disenchanted, for various reasons, with the Sandinista leadership. These two groupings are seconded by other sectarian Marxist or radical Christian groups, and each seems to have a trade-union section of its own. But it is impossible to determine whether these leftist remnants can play an independent role.

Another group whose future is uncertain consists of that section of the Sandinista bureaucracy that retains some kind of conscience or will to resist the direction of the regime. These elements are not to be disregarded. There is a steady stream of Sandinista defectors into the ranks of the armed opposition. Together with the remnants of future possible fissures within the leadership, this by now rather considerable element may prove crucial in the struggle to free Nicaragua from Soviet domination.

Of course, for many Nicaraguans as for many Americans, the key to the Nicaraguan contest remains the armed opposition, the *contras* themselves. Although one would be hard put to know it from the U.S. press, the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO), the main armed grouping, is by no means a uniformly rightist organization, notwithstanding the presence in its Honduran-side leadership of the conservative Adolfo Calero and the former National Guard officer Enrique Bermúdez. (With regard to the widely reported "Somocista" past of the *contra* commanders, it is worth noting that 32 former officers of Somoza's National Guard are now serving in the Sandinista forces, a list headed by General Federico Prado.) In the past, social democrats like Arturo Cruz and Alfonso Robelo were labeled as mere front-men for the *contras*; today this is clearly not the case. UNO has attracted a wide range of Left-leaning democrats who simply see in it the only way to save Nicaragua. I even heard that the second-level political leadership of UNO includes a number of former Trotskyists from various Latin American countries!

But those who insist, while fighting the *comandantes*, that they are the true Sandinistas and therefore perceive some kind of continuity between the revolutionary struggle against Somoza and that against the nine *comandantes* are, one gathers, increasingly distant from a widespread and growing sentiment within Nicaragua itself. Many in the opposition feel that the Nicaraguans have had enough of revolution, enough of Sandino, enough of red-and-black flags, enough of this or that promise "in the name of the people." One *contra* figure told me that "this nonsense about who is the real Sandinista may be useful for winning over people in Washington, but not in Managua." (This must sound ironic to American ears, tuned to the Washington debate.)

I encountered similar reactions in discussing whether the *contras* will, in the end, opt for a traditional military structure and strategy or follow any of the guerrilla structures and strategies that would seem attractive to irregular troops fighting in the jungle. The fact is that the *contras* have by and large emphasized the traditional military approach, and precisely as a means of affirming their break with the Sandinistas. I was assured that anybody who attempted to sell even the techniques or advice of a Mao or a Guevara would be greeted with great hostility by the *contra* rank-and-file. And this is the same rank-and-file, it should be remembered, that today is made up overwhelmingly of poor peasants, many illiterate, who oppose Communism for the same reasons that friendly U.S. intellectuals would have them oppose capitalism. They do not see themselves as professional soldiers (and they are not mercenaries, a charge for which no evidence has ever been presented). The phrase "peasants in arms" is commonly employed.

Whether the armed opposition or the internal opposition can or will win the day in Nicaragua is by no means certain at this point. For my part, I continue to suspect that however Fidel Castro might attempt to prevent it, there remains the possibility of a Nicaraguan Grenada—the collapse of the regime in the wake of a faction fight in the leadership. The recent bloody events in South Yemen followed this pattern, and although they did not make possible that country's liberation, the experience, along with similar convulsions in Mozambique and elsewhere, shows that there is a fundamental instability in many of the party elites that have come to power under the Soviet aegis today.

5.

By now we have grown accustomed to intellectuals who claim some literary or artistic distance from doctrinaire leftism while nonetheless continuing stridently to defend the crimes and outrages committed by the Soviet Union or its worldwide surrogates. But there are examples that continue to shock by their boldness, if not their shamelessness.

Such a one must be the German novelist Guenter Grass, who has become a tireless propagandist in the ranks of the "blame-America-first" lobby. Undoubtedly his best-known recent performance in this genre was at the PEN Club congress earlier this year in New York. But among Nicara-

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guan oppositionists he is better known for an incident of such audacious bad faith that it merits recounting here.

Some time ago Grass visited Nicaragua and Poland in quick succession. Upon returning to his native land, he published an article in *Die Zeit* comparing the two countries' recent dramas. Grass then met with the editors of the Polish underground journal *Przeglad Polityczny* and, after discussions with them, formulated a proposition: a leading Polish intellectual should begin a correspondence with the Sandinista culture minister, the poet and priest Ernesto Cardenal.

One can easily imagine how many leftist consciences in Europe would have been salved had this proposal gone in the direction Grass, a defender of the Sandinistas, hoped. For as he baldly stated his intention, through this initiative "both of the dogmatic temples of faith, capitalist and Communist, would be shaken."

Fortunately, the Poles did not fall into the trap. Rather, they directed a letter of criticism to Cardenal, beginning with the stern admonition that "the Soviet temple is quite sturdy, thanks in part to you and your friend's [Grass's] policies, and we have no desire to shake the American temple." Further along in the letter they noted sarcastically how "Western intellectuals trumpet their support for revolutionary Nicaragua with the same hysterical euphoria as they did before for Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola, or Ethiopia." After denying any sympathy for Nicaragua's Somocista past, the Polish editors declared:

> We are not surprised that, as your policies oppose the U.S. and run counter to its interest, you look for allies among Communist countries. We also understand that in your situation it may seem better to forget about the domestic policies and foreign aggression of these allies; you certainly cannot plead ignorance of these things. It is impossible for clergymen not to know about the situation of the Church and its faithful in Czechoslovakia or the USSR; it is impossible for poets not to know about the situation of poets in the "people's republics". . . .

The Polish editors concluded their letter with a list of stern questions about such matters as the attacks on *La Prensa*, the war on the Miskito Indians and other indigenous groups, and the Sandinista policy of "rely[ing] on the help of Cuban experts, representatives of a country where workers receive heavy sentences for trying to organize free trade unions." Addressing Cardenal personally, they warned that, just as the Polish workers came to despise "their" red flag and *Internationale*, "a poet will emerge in Nicaragua who will compose a poem about the universally hated, ubiquitous name of Sandino."

Little need be added. Clearly, the Poles understand the situation in Nicaragua very well. Similarly, nearly everybody I have encountered in the Nicaraguan opposition identifies with Solidarity, and indeed, many agree that what most frightens the Sandinista rulers—even more, perhaps, than the United States—is, precisely, a "Polish"-type situation.

One thing that sets the present moment off from previous historical turning points is the very small number of Western intellectuals who are today willing to identify with the *contra* cause. True, the Nicaraguan resistance today possesses a powerful lobbying agency in the Reagan administration. But aside from that, its serious advocates —those willing to investigate the situation in Nicaragua rather than to "let the President handle it"—are few, a literal handful. This is not to fault those who have supported the *contra* cause; it is only to point out that more is necessary in the arena of historical meditation and analysis. When the Spanish Civil War, deformed by Muscovite influence, turned into a nightmare, there was an Orwell to grapple with the phenomenon—and there was an international trend, tiny as it then seemed, prepared to hear his arguments. Where is the Orwell, the Dos Passos, the Camus of the Nicaraguan civil war?

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The Powerful Simplifiers

John P. Sisk

THAT notable economist, Henry David Thoreau, writes in *Walden*: "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail." Later in a memorable passage he adapts this pre-Keynesian program to the situation of "honest, hard-working, but shiftless" John Field, an Irishman living with his wife and several children in a ramshackle house and scraping a mean living from rented land. Thoreau tells Field that he might easily build himself a decent home and cut down on his expenses by refraining from tea, coffee, butter, milk, and beef, which are only debilitating his system, and end up with leisure time to go fishing and huckleberrying. But in the end Thoreau knows that he is only wasting his time, for "alas! the culture of an Irishman is an enterprise to be undertaken with a sort of moral bog hoe."

It is a wonderfully written passage, Thoreau at his ironic-didactic best when it is easy for him to persuade the reader not simply that there is something to be said for his view of things (which there generally is) but that there is very little if anything to be said for any other. This is the way it is with powerful simplifiers, for whom quotidian life tends to be less a challenge by complexities than an affront by the absurd. And in quotidian life, as Karl Marx demonstrated, nothing is more likely to bring out one's propensity for simplification than economics.

Thoreau in *Walden*, exploiting the mythic correspondence between past and present, often sounds like James Joyce in *Ulysses*, but it is the poet Ezra Pound whom he more regularly reminds one of. Put the latter's *Guide to Kulchur* alongside *Walden* and it is immediately clear that Pound's title would serve for both books, even though it is impossible to imagine Pound living contentedly in a homemade shack beside a wilderness pond. Pound, for instance, had no more hope for the culture of the English (or that of his fellow Americans) than Thoreau had for John Field. But they had a good deal else in common. Both were swimmers as well as poets, both had briefly tried teaching, both had been jailbirds, both were what Quentin Anderson has called imperial selves, with the imperial self's need to improve the world at once, with a moral bog hoe if necessary. What Henry James, Sr. said of Thoreau—that he "was literally the most childlike, unconscious and unblushing egotist it has ever been my fortune to encounter in the ranks of manhood"—was an anticipation of what many, including his long-time friend William Carlos Williams, would later say of Pound. And of course they had in common their economic simplicities—though Thoreau's economics was not further simplified, as was Pound's, by the simplicity of anti-Semitism.

Pound's economic simplicity derived from Major H.C. Douglas's Social Credit theories which, Pound was convinced, would both abolish "usura" and preserve civilization. In the early winter of 1945, awaiting trial for treason in a Washington, D.C. jail, Pound told reporters, "I took Mussolini an economic theory that could have blown the roof off Europe." The University of Virginia economist Kenneth G. Elzinga has written (in the *Wall Street Journal*) that were it not for his economic fallacy Pound's judgment might have remained "unstained by anti-Semitism and his politics free of their totalitarian bent." Elzinga is very clear on the nature of the fallacy; nevertheless, if a personality like Pound's is to cease being a producer of passionate simplicities it needs not a sounder economic theory but remaking from the bottom up—something like the fundamentalist's born-again experience.

Perhaps he did not, after all, read closely enough his beloved Confucius, who certainly has had the effect on other people of discouraging dangerous simplifications. Pound had his Confucius with him during his six months' incarceration at Pisa, where he had about as much living space as Thoreau had at Walden, and Confucius makes the expected appearances in *The Pisan Cantos*, along with much else, including the funny-money theories, the anti-Semitism, and Pound's "old great aunt" who saw "damn all Europe" and even rode on a mule at Tangiers.

Pound also had a good deal in common with Mao Zedong: both were swimmers and poets who had been teachers; Mao too had an economic theory with which he expected to blow the roof off China, if not the world; both were in rebellion against what Pound, in his poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," calls "a botched civilization." According to the critic Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era*, Pound, who was then in what he liked to call the bughouse (St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington), had high hopes for Mao's poetry, seeing in it the true sensibility. Perhaps Mao gave him the same comfort Mussolini did when, as Pound reports in *Kulchur*, he "told his people that poetry is a necessity to the state." Before long, however, Mao's men were going after the Confucians with their bog hoes.

Confucius, in fact, was part of the tradition Mao had rebelled

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against as a young man. He wanted to make it new in a big Marxist-Leninist way, even if he had to transmogrify both Marx and Lenin in the process. Hence, like his fellow poet Pound, he staked all on an economic simplicity which it pleased him to promulgate in poetic terms ("Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom," "The Great Leap Forward," "The Grand Harmony") that prosaic reality had a habit of contradicting. Perhaps Mao's conviction that poetry and making it new politically were complementary helps to explain the popularity of his own guide to culture, his *Little Red Book*, among radical simplifiers in America in the 1960's. But for Mao as for Pound, the flowers bloomed in unanticipated ways and the Great Leap Forward ended in a pratfall, from which one might conclude that if, as Shelley contended, poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, we might all (including the poets themselves) be better off if they remain unacknowledged.

It is not hard to see why Mao's *Little Red Book* made him a charismatic figure for many anti-Americans, particularly during our own late cultural revolution. In it, the "running dogs" of capitalistic America are the source of all evil. The American novelist Henry Miller had earlier said pretty much the same thing as he gave lengthy expression to that deeply ingrained bias against the American enterprise which among literary people has so often substituted for anti-Semitism as an organizing simplicity. Miller loved Confucius as much as Thoreau and Pound did, but he would have sympathized with Mao's rebellion against his Confucian establishment since it was a repetition of the rebellion against what Miller's own establishment called civilization. As for the latter, he agreed with Pound that its condition was parlous, but he also believed, at least when he was writing one of his guides to culture, *The Cosmological Eye*, that people like Pound and Joyce were part of the problem. Pound, however, thought that the author of *The Tropic of Cancer*, unlike Joyce and Wyndham Lewis, was "sane and without kinks."

Miller returning home by boat from Paris reports that "Suddenly I was back where I had started from—the same faces, the same voices, the same blatant stupidity." This may tell us less about Americans than about the state of mind of the reporter, but Miller's sense that he is again among people living lives of quiet and sometimes not so quiet desperation suggests that he must have enjoyed *Walden* (except for those kinky parts that extol sexual continence). He admitted the influence of Whitman and Emerson; indeed, he was himself something of a transcendentalist, if only of the orgasmic subvariety, and might have been very much at home at the famous Chardon Street Convention held in Boston in the fall of 1840. There, to judge from Emerson's report in the *Dial*, he would have found

> a great variety of dialect and costume . . . a great deal of confusion, eccentricity, and freak . . . as well as zeal and enthusiasm. If the assembly was disorderly, it was picturesque. Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day-Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians and Philosophers. . . . The most daring innovators and the champions-until-death of the old causes sat side by side.

The Convention was a grand coming-together of passionate simplifiers, among them William Lloyd Garrison, Bronson Alcott, Jones Very, Theodore Parker, Father Taylor (Melville's Father Mapple in *Moby Dick*), and "that flea of Conventions," Mrs. Abigail Folsom. All of them, Emerson observes (caught as so often between irony and enthusiasm), "were made up to obey the great inward Commander," who had already made his imperial presence felt in such Emersonian manifestoes as "The American Scholar" and "The Divinity School Address."

There is no indication that the Perfectionist John Humphrey Noyes was at the Convention, however he might have been there in spirit. Noyes believed that, Christ's second coming having occurred in 70 C.E., it was now possible to achieve a condition of utter sinlessness. When he announced in 1834 that he had achieved such a state he had to give up his position in the Yale theology department, which may have suspected that the simplicities of Perfectionism were more likely to end theology than enrich it. In 1846 Noyes established the Putney Corporation of Perfectionists in Vermont, where his innovation of complex marriage, otherwise known as free love, might have struck Henry Miller as a healthy breaking of the taboos of bourgeois marriage. ("Whenever a taboo is broken, something good happens," Miller stated in his *Paris Review* interview.) After being arrested for adultery, the good new simplicities of complex marriage having collided with the old complexities of unregenerate bourgeois society, Noyes in 1848 established his famous Oneida Community whose economic innovations surely would have struck Pound as a move in the right direction—and one more demonstration that, as Pound says in *Kulchur*, "Economics is NOT a cold subject."

There were times before the Civil War when all of New England appeared to be a Chardon Street Convention from which, as one inward Commander after another proved unable to resist the urgent dynamism of a beautiful simplicity, perfectionist and utopian enterprises went off in all directions. The soil was hospitable to a hundred flowers and more, but, as most of the enthusiastic cultivators discovered, a hundred flowers may resist staying together in a bouquet, and their bog hoes, however vigorously wielded, may not produce the irreversible great leaps forward that inward Commanders demand.

People like Thoreau and Emerson, however much they may have stimulated in others the bouquet-making and forward-leaping impulses, were interested in the flowering of individual blossoms; in fact, they could be as wary of the simplifications of bouquet-making and forward-leaping as they were of the simplicities of philanthropy. So was Nathaniel Hawthorne, but he was not the one to let his innate

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suspicion of group enthusiasm interfere with private advantage. He joined the Brook Farm commune, seeing it as a place where he could be sheltered and fed while getting some writing done. Founder George Ripley gave him, as his special chore, the management of the manure pile, a proper enough occupation for a writer who wanted to think through simplicities to the bottom of things. The experiment left Hawthorne thoroughly disillusioned with utopian reforms of all kinds, but it paid off later with his novel *A Blithedale Romance*, which is about the consequence of mistaking simplicities for profundities.

By now, of course, it is apparent that Chardon Street is perennial in American civilization. What were the 1960's and early 70's if not a nationwide Chardon Street Convention of greatly leaping-forward innovators, many of them champions-unto-death of causes old and new? Some dreamed of a gathering together of gorgeously blooming flowers into a terminal bouquet, so that we would all be home free in a grand and harmonic simplicity; some, inspired by Thoreau, went alone or in rapturous groups to grow beans in the wilderness, or, no less inspired by him, defied the obscene aspirations of the running dogs of the capitalistic state and ended up as jailbirds; some, having like the Weatherpeople discovered the intoxicating power of virtue-laced violence, trashed about with very trenchant bog hoes; some, having read Noam Chomsky, Herbert Marcuse, and Mao, were moved to go off to Cuba and cut sugar cane for Castro, who turned out not to be as sympathetic to poets as Pound thought Mussolini was; some, following the prescription of Dr. Timothy Leary, learned that drugs were the quickest of all ways to leap forward into simplicity, while others, following the lead of Noyes and Henry Miller, went peak-experiencing at Esalen and Sandstone; some hooked themselves up to A-meters, tried primal screaming, or enrolled in an Erhard Seminars Training program; some took up transcendental meditation or became citizens of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's World Government for the Age of Enlightenment; an intrepid few banded together with that charismatic simplifier and exponent of complex marriage, Charles Manson, in an attempt to reduce the whole human-potential movement to black farce; gentler souls meanwhile ate natural food, read Confucius, voted for McGovern, and hoped for the best. *Mutatis mutandis*, Emerson's report in the *Dial* still covers the lot of them.

Even now in the less spectacular 80's the Chardon Street factor has been at work as usual, producing at one extreme the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's loving community in Antelope, Oregon (the deported Bhagwan now flies hither and yon about the world seeking sanctuary) and at the other extreme the three-day Aryan Nations neo-Nazi Congress at Hayden Lake, Idaho, in early July of this year (a whitening of America in response to Charles Reich's almost forgotten greening). Frederick Crews, in a brilliant essay in the *New York Review of Books* (May 29, 1986), shows the same factor at work in the human sciences as they overreact against positivism—much as Chardon Street overreacted against the enlightenment rationalism from which in time would sprout the flower of positivism.

What strikes Crews is "a growing apriorism—a willingness to settle issues by theoretical decree, without even a pretense of evidential appeal." This theoreticism, he contends, "is less a specific position than a mood of antinomian rebellion and self-indulgence." Coming down to us from the late 60's, it is "a revulsion against dry rationality, a cherishing of direct intuitive belief, and a willing surrender to intellectual, political, and spiritual counterauthorities." Since at the heart of the problem is the human appetite for unquestioning belief, slogans get treated as facts while theoreticists present themselves as "a group of deep knowers" graced with an epistemic privilege that is a sure "antidote to chronic error." One conspicuous consequence: "Sectarian zeal, which now appears stronger than ever in the academy, provides all the guidance required to tell which tenets should be discarded or updated to match the latest political wisdom."

This sounds like that great breeder of simplicities, gnosticism, which was one of the presiding spirits at Chardon Street. It also sounds a good deal like the psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich, who even before he emigrated to America could sound as if his own inward Commander had bloodlines from Chardon. Like Pound, Reich was possessed by a grand simplicity, his theory of orgone energy, which he claimed to be able to capture for marvelous therapeutic use in his orgone energy accumulator. (When he made the mistake of transporting it across state lines, he too became a jailbird.) Like Pound, Reich was protected from scoffing nonbelievers by an epistemic privilege: their attempts to rebut him were invalidated by the clear evidence that they suffered from the "emotional plague," the disease he had diagnosed. If in the days before he came to America Reich had been able to persuade the Russians that Marxism and Freudianism were mutually reinforcing certainties, he might have put into their hands the means of turning the whole world into a Putney Corporation of Perfectionists.

Reich's orgone energy accumulator might have been attractive to Noyes as a means of reinforcing the cosmic dimension of complex marriage. Henry Miller, the last man in the world to suffer from a deprivation of cosmic erotic energy, would have seen it as one more gadget in the "senseless machine we have made of America," however sympathetic he might have been to Reich's rebellion against the psychiatric establishment. When Mao wanted to reinforce his connections with sources of the Great Harmony he needed only to swim the Yangtze river, preferably with TV cameras in attendance. And Thoreau, who prided himself on needing no mechanical aids, got the same effect from fishing Walden Pond at midnight or, lying abed on an autumn morning, from hearing the loon "making the woods ring with his wild laughter." Reich's accumulator, assuming that it worked at all, would have been an

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obvious threat to Thoreau's athletic chastity and therefore to his whole economy.

It is a matter of degree, of course; given our ineluctable epistemic limitations, we are all prone to simplicities and all tempted to wield our moral bog hoes lest, things failing to cohere, complexities demoralize us. If you are like Emerson you can with some equanimity contemplate the hundred divergently blooming flowers because you do not doubt the benevolent presence of a transcendental bouquet-making force with which your own inward Commander has hot-line connections. But for too many of us, the inward Commander, being a reductionist and perfectionist at heart, wants coherence now and settles for the clarifying simplicity and closure of a Grand Harmony.

THE conviction that to simplify is inevitably to clarify in the direction of truth helps to make a cult out of simplicity. So Thoreau, lover of paradox though he was, failed to see as he cultivated simplicity that those violaters of his Grand Harmony, the newspapers, the railroad, and the telegraph cable, were themselves attempts not to complicate life but to simplify it, and indeed became the means to further attempts at simplification. As the Marxist world is painfully learning, nothing is more likely to complicate life than an effort to simplify it with a grand theory. When this news gets through to some people they become laissez-faireists—whether in morals, economics, or politics—in the expectation that we will all be better off if we let some kind of hidden hand determine the warp and woof of our lives. Others, more skeptical (they are often closet anarchists or nihilists), come to suspect all theory as either a naive and falsifying reduction or a cowardly refusal to confront the Gorgon face of reality. But all these people are themselves theorists, and when theories are held without irony or charity they easily become tyrannizing grand simplicities.

As Chardon Street demonstrated, to be an American is to be free to theorize, but to be an American is also to run the risk of fellow theorizers who, finding the proliferation of theories to be an abomination, yearn for a simplicity that will end all theorizing in the grand coherence that Pound hoped (but often doubted) would be modeled on his *Cantos*. The Chardon Street factor helps to explain why for 19th-century European radicals like Filippo Buonarroti, American democracy was a travesty of their utopian expectations. As the historian James H. Billington observes in *Fire in the Minds of Men*, American democracy for Buonarroti and his kind "rejected the basic impulse of the ideological revolutionary tradition toward radical simplification." Buonarroti, a Florentine and direct descendant of Michelangelo, would have agreed with Pound and Miller about the condition of Western civilization, and Mao's Cultural Revolution would probably have struck him as the proper way to reduce the vision of a grand simplicity to irreversible fact. But the Chardon Street Convention could only have appalled him.

The utopian Buonarroti would have been no less appalled by Leszek Kolakowski's recent Jefferson Lecture, "The Idolatry of Politics," sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Kolakowski notes that the Enlightenment has accustomed us "to the belief that all the pillars on which hope for a good world rested—freedom, justice, equality, peace, brotherhood, prosperity, abundance—can be built jointly and simultaneously in a harmonious progression." Efforts to realize this grand simplicity have been the occasion of endless charges and countercharges between optimistic progressives (whether liberals or socialists) on the one hand and the conservatives on the other. Conceding that there is some justice on both sides, Kolakowski concludes that "it is probably safer for us that progressives and conservatives coexist in unremitting conflict than that one of those irreconcilable mentalities should gain the definitive victory."

Kolakowski might seem to imply a paradox: democracy, which began with the highest expectations about the freedom of the individual to theorize on all matters, must learn to lower its expectations if it wishes to survive. A better implication, however, may be that to survive, a democracy must learn to change its expectations as it lives with the fact that people quite normally interpret freedom to theorize as freedom to use all possible means to close the gap between theory and praxis—that they quite normally ask the question Thoreau asks in "Civil Disobedience": "How can a man be satisfied to entertain an opinion merely, and enjoy it?"

FORTUNATELY, life itself often enough turns out to be a school in which reluctant pupils sometimes learn to modify theory and so make the gap easier to live with. Mao before he died had learned that the Marxist-Leninist theory was no more likely than his poetry to produce the Great Harmony, that it was only a simplicity after all—so that having been something of a modernist to begin with he went on to suffer the postmodernist's discovery of illusion. In old age Henry Miller, according to his biographer Jay Martin, was unhappy with the hundred flowers of pornography that he had helped to cultivate and regretted that the young lacked reverence. Pound, back in Europe after his long sojourn in the bughouse, having learned, as he puts it in "Canto 117," "That I lost my center/ fighting the world./ The dreams clash/ and are shattered—" would obviously have written a quite different *Guide to Kulchur*.

Pound writes in "Canto 116," "If love be not in the house there is nothing." Perhaps something like this is what Emerson had in mind when he wrote of Thoreau: "He needs to fall in love, to sweeten him and strengthen him." Emerson's kind of falling in love (his inward Commander being still a bit straightlaced) aspires to domesticity, the complications of which can teach one to regard the imperial simplicities with a cooler eye. It is pleasant to think that Hawthorne, very much in love with Sophia Peabody and anxious to become domestic with her, knew this ahead of time as he worked on his manure pile in that Brook Farm atmosphere of transcendental simplicities.

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For Art's Sake

LESS THAN ONE. By JOSEPH BRODSKY. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 501 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by FERNANDA EBERSTADT

IN 1972, Joseph Brodsky, a poet with a prison record (for "parasitism") at home and a high critical reputation abroad, was exiled from the Soviet Union. Brodsky, who was born in Leningrad in 1940 of Jewish parents, eventually came to the United States, where he now teaches literature at Columbia University and Mount Holyoke. *A Part of Speech*, the collection of his poems issued here in 1980 (almost all of them translated from the Russian), reveals a poet stunningly precise in his imagery, technically playful, and, with exceptions, chilly in temperature. Now his first volume of prose—a collection of essays on poetry, history, geography, politics, and metaphysics—has just been published to considerable acclaim.

For a poet, estrangement from so satisfying and so intricately inflected a mother tongue as Russian might be thought a sorrow more silencing than imprisonment or censorship. Brodsky, however, is a man fortified by an unflagging sense of mission. Unlike the majority of Russian and Eastern European writers living in the West, Brodsky has adopted the English language as his own, and brought to it an independence of thought, a thickness and subtlety of texture, and an omnivorous appetite for idiom that are uniquely his.

Less Than One contains eighteen essays, written over the last ten years of Brodsky's sojourn in America; all but three of them were composed in English. The author's photograph on the back jacket of this volume delivers some clues as to the particular qualities of mind which his readers may expect to find within: the poet, freckled, seasoned, and disdainful, scowls at us with narrowed eyes and gimlet mouth, looking less like one's idea of an aesthete than like a Boer farmer defending his land from the mob.

The book may be understood as a kind of intellectual autobiography. The opening and closing pieces are memoirs, or what might more accurately be called travelogues through time: recollections of the poet's childhood, a tribute to his native city of Leningrad, and, most movingly, a concluding summoning up of Brodsky's dead parents which is intended simultaneously as a foretaste of his own mortality. In between (and no less autobiographical in nature) are observations on other poets. These include the "Silver Poets" of Leningrad: Osip Mandelstam, Anna Akhmatova, and Marina Tsvetaeva (Brodsky includes here an obituary tribute to Mandelstam's widow Nadezhda, who, for decades the vessel and memorializer of her dead husband's verse, thus became herself a poet in Brodsky's eyes); such Mediterranean and Atlantic favorites as Eugenio Montale, Constantine Cavafy, W.H. Auden, and Derek Walcott; and novelists like Dostoevsky and the 20th-century surrealist Andrei Platonov, whose highly stylized use of language catapults them from the realm of prose (in Brodsky's view, the bargain basement of art) into the realm of poetry.

Supplementing these more general essays are two readings, remarkable for their patience and fidelity, of individual poems. One, fifty pages long, dissects word by word W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939." The second, seventy pages in length, explicates Marina Tsvetaeva's elegy on the death of Rilke. In addition to these works of textual analysis are essays of a speculative or philosophical nature: a discourse on tyranny, a commencement address to the graduating class of Williams College developing an injunction from the Christian Gospel, and, most spectacularly, notes on a trip to Istanbul which explore some of the ethical and metaphysical divisions between East and West.

A reader coming fresh to Brodsky's work will be struck initially by the wide and hard-hitting inventiveness of his diction. Brodsky uses language shore to shore, covering vast amounts of verbal territory in short order. His prose is tough, resourceful, and, though sometimes quite difficult or obstructed in its efforts to express everything as precisely and truthfully as possible, nonetheless glaringly alive. His prose style is notable for its abrupt shifts of gear, from a high elegiac strain, to deflating slang, to technical jargon. The deflating impulse, in particular, yields some felicitous phrases, as (for instance) when Brodsky tersely dismisses as "bald and uptight" the image of the young Lenin that adorns almost every surface of public Soviet space.

Joined with Brodsky's tendency to drive English usage beyond its borders is a sometimes ornery independence of mind. By his own account, Brodsky is a writer who from earliest youth fought with his fists, walked out of classrooms, and disbelieved what he was told. His habit of thinking hard about time, space, and the meaning of history, his insistence on figuring out everything for himself, proved a healthy antidote to the loss of will which Soviet life induces in its subjects. Brodsky is (in consequence?) an immensely opinionated writer—such epithets as "witless," "scum," and "drivel" come frequently to his pen—whose own vision of the world is imprinted on every page of this collection like lines on the palms of a hand. Indeed, *Less Than One* may be most memorable for its heady onslaught of idiosyncratic aphorisms, observations, and verdicts, some of which are merely contrary—such as Brodsky's contention that to "an unprejudiced man," monotheism is synonymous with autocracy and polytheism with democracy—some overly elliptical, some even repellent in their

FERNANDA EBERSTADT *is the author of a novel,* Low Tide *(Knopf). Her previous articles in* COMMENTARY *include "The Prince of English Poets" (August 1986) and "Out of the Drawer & Into the West" (July 1985).*

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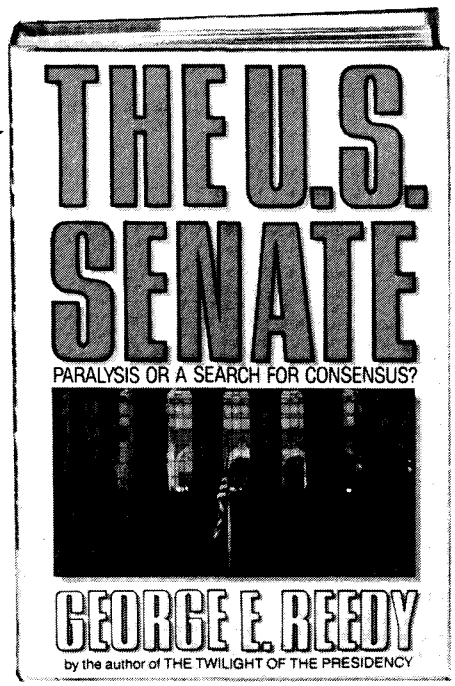
crabbed and arrogant misanthropy, but many of which possess a startling justice that makes one sit up and think twice.

ALTHOUGH the majority of the essays that make up *Less Than One* are high in quality, a few have more feathers than flesh to them. Among the latter, "On Tyranny" is a shopworn jeremiad against the banality of evil and the blights of high technology, mass production, and overpopulation. (Brodsky, who hails from a tyrant state which houses barely thirty people per square mile, might be expected to know that evil and degradation in this world do not come from allowing parents to have as many children as their hearts desire.) "A Commencement Address," taking its text from the Sermon on the Mount, enjoins an audience of well-to-do American youngsters to imitate Christ by turning the other cheek when hounded and overwhelmed by an invincible enemy—under the circumstances, an invitation not so much to civil disobedience as to massive self-pity.

At their best, however—which is most of the time—Brodsky's essays combine passion, common sense, and nerve with an intellectual seriousness that has few parallels in present-day criticism. In this category belongs especially the gritty and elegiac title piece about the poet's youth in Leningrad as a Jew, a high-school dropout, a factory worker with a library card, and, later on, a jailbird. In this memoir Brodsky describes with great precision the peculiar character of his postwar generation with its badly made clothing, its love of culture and of intellectual complexity, its rejection of Soviet reality, and its utter isolation. In "A Flight from Byzantium," the East is held to embody the essentially spatial principle that all things are merely intertwining patterns on a carpet, whereas the West represents dynamism, autonomy, and time; the essay, written in the form of a diary, is riveting, both in its intellectual brilliance and, in quite a different way, in the intensity of its loathing for things Oriental, especially Japanese tourists. Arresting, too, is Brodsky's portrayal of his parents in "In a Room and a Half." Here he writes of what it is like for Soviet émigrés like himself "not to be allowed to see their mothers or fathers on their deathbed; the silence that follows their request for an emergency visa to attend a relative's funeral":

> And then it's too late, and a man or a woman puts the receiver down and walks out of the door into the foreign afternoon feeling something neither language has words for, and for which no howl will suffice, either. . . . No country has mastered the art of destroying its subjects' souls as well as Russia, and no man with a pen in his hand is up to mending them; no, this is a job for the Almighty only, this is what He has *all that time of His for. May* English then house my dead.

THE temperament which pervades this collection of essays is one of



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old-fashioned conservatism running to reaction, with all that implies by way of an insistence on man's inherent wickedness, resistance to notions of progress, enmity to Rousseauian utopianism, and, not least, disdain for the modern world. Indeed, although Brodsky today is a free man who writes much about the meaning of freedom as against the many forms of slavery which evil inspires, the freedom he has in mind is personal, inner, freedom. His belief that a poet must defend an ideal of "civilization" against modern "social reality" has seemingly dissuaded him from endorsing the political freedoms he now enjoys. In his own ostentatiously neutral phrase, Brodsky in coming to the West has merely "switched Empires" (as he writes in the poem, "Lullaby of Cape Cod"), and is as committed to criticizing the irresoluteness and materialism of the democracies as he is to berating Soviet totalitarianism for its dullness and brutality.

If this is one respect in which Brodsky may be seen to part company with many conservatives, another would surely have to do with the central conviction which animates all his work, and to which he adheres as to a religious truth: namely, that language is a supreme and lawmaking deity, and that poets are that deity's anointed priesthood. Why? As he explains in "To Please a Shadow," his tribute to Auden, whereas all other things in the world are subject to the depredations of time, poetry, the verbal articulation of perception, represents a restructuring of time—i.e., of nature—itself. From this stipulation of the preeminence of language over the natural world follows Brodsky's belief that poetry, not religion, is the unique source both of metaphysical truth and of moral value: "It is this law," he writes, "that teaches a poet a greater rectitude than any creed is capable of." Or, as he put it in a response to Milan Kundera published in the New York *Times Book Review*, "an individual's . . . aesthetics give rise to his ethics and his sense of history—not the other way around."

Making a religion of art is, of course, not an impulse peculiar to this poet—although Brodsky may indeed be alone in restricting the realm of art to poetry. But neither, unfortunately, does Brodsky escape the intellectual and spiritual consequences of his position, most conspicuous among such consequences being the arid and cockeyed solipsism that comes of exalting man's creation above God's. The worship of art over all things leads him, moreover, to enter claims on its behalf which neither art nor artists can fulfill. For an example we need go no farther than Brodsky's astonishing contention that W.H. Auden was "the greatest mind of the 20th century," and that "reading him is one of the very few ways (if not the only one) available for feeling decent." Finally, one cannot help noticing that although Brodsky treats admirably with the forms that poets use, he skimps on what it is that poets actually say in their poems (dismissing almost parenthetically, for instance, Auden's Freudian, Marxist, and religious "terminology"). Yet if "A rhyme turns an idea into law," as Brodsky maintains it does, is not a law-abiding reader obliged to pay serious attention to the ideas that poets legislate, some of which have been very awful ideas indeed?

Nonetheless, so subtle and so invigorating are Brodsky's love and understanding of poetry and its makers, so searching and adroit his readings, that *Less Than One* might *almost* serve to vindicate its author's energetic canonization of his own profession.

The Real Paul?

THE MYTHMAKER: PAUL AND THE INVENTION OF CHRISTIANITY. By HYAM MACCOBY. *Harper & Row. 237 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by JAROSLAV PELIKAN

THE New Testament speaks of Jesus Christ as "a sign spoken against" and "a stone of stumbling." But at least since the 18th-century Enlightenment, it has been the apostle Paul who has often been cast in the role of (in the words of Thomas Jefferson) "first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus"; for Jefferson, who twice took upon himself the task of "abstracting what is really his from the rubbish in which it is buried" in the New Testament, found the assignment of separating the "diamonds" from the "dung" and of identifying the authentic religion of Jesus to be "obvious and easy," carrying it out in two or three evenings after the day's work was done. This authentic religion of Jesus he set in opposition to "the stupidity of some, and roguery of others of his disciples," adding that "of this band of dupes and impostors, Paul was the great Coryphaeus."

Yet the same apostle Paul has also been the source and inspiration for many of the great reformations, personal and corporate, throughout Christian history. In 386—thus exactly sixteen centuries ago this year—when, according to his *Confessions*, Augustine heard a voice calling, "*Tolle, lege!* Take it! Read it!" it was the reading of Paul's epistle to the Romans that converted him to Catholic Christianity. Similarly, when Martin Luther in his "tower experience" came to what he believed to be "the discovery of the gospel" of justification by faith, it was once again the epistle to the Romans that he was pondering. Luther's interpretation of Romans, as summarized in his preface to that epistle, was in turn the message by which John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" in his own conversion to evangelical Christianity at Aldersgate on May 24, 1738. And "the bombshell that fell into the playground of the theologians" after World War I was Karl Barth's commentary on the same epistle, *Der Römerbrief* (*The Epistle to the Romans*), published in 1919.

The ambiguity of Paul's locus in Christian history suggested by that recital provides the basis for Hyam Maccoby's iconoclastic book, *The Mythmaker*. Maccoby, who is a fellow of the Leo Baeck College in London, interprets Paul, not Jesus, as "the founder of Christianity as

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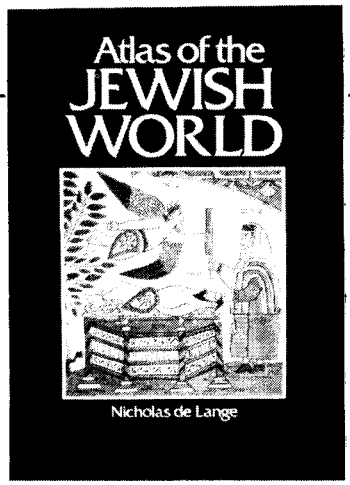
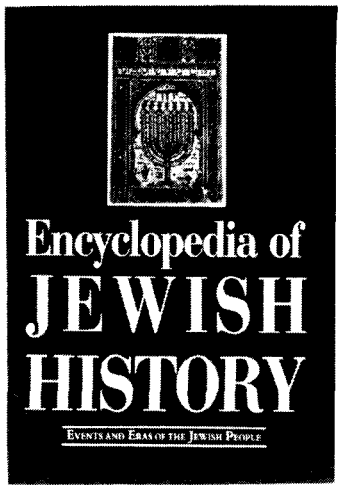
a new religion." According to Maccoby, Paul was not a Jew "of the tribe of Benjamin" as he claimed to be, but a Gentile convert from paganism to Judaism (who "knew very little Hebrew") and then from that Judaism to Christianity. Much less was he, as he also claimed, an ex-Pharisee, or as the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament claim, a pupil of the great Rabbi Gamaliel. Rather, he "regarded the Jewish tradition with awe and envy, and had sought to master it, only to meet with failure and rebuff"; thus he had at best a dilettante's acquaintance with rabbinic Judaism, but "fantasized a career as a successful Pharisee, which he had voluntarily renounced."

The real Pharisee in Maccoby's picture of primitive Christianity was none other than Jesus himself, whose Pharisaism the evangelists, in keeping with their *Tendenz*, suppressed in their accounts. And so, Maccoby writes, "it was Paul's frustrated love affair with Judaism that created Pauline Christianity." This he achieved by a fusion, into "a new and powerful myth," of elements borrowed from gnosticism (above all, the myth of the descent of the savior from heaven), from the mystery religions (the idea of a dying and resurrected god), and from Judaism (the authority of the Hebrew Bible, but seen now as the "Old Testament," to be interpreted messianically). In sum, Paul was a "mythologist" rather than a "theologian."

The "real life" of this Paul, in Maccoby's view, "was more like a picaresque novel than the conventional life of a saint": he was "an adventurer of undistinguished background" and "the greatest fantasist of all," who resorted to "sheer bluff" in putting over his "concoction" of various disparate elements. This was "the real Paul—the tormented adventurer, threading his way by guile through a series of stormy episodes, and setting up a form of religion that was his own individual creation." Not only did Paul "invent" what eventually became the orthodox Christian doctrines of Jesus as a divine being and of his death on the cross as an atoning sacrifice; Maccoby even regards it as "abundantly clear that Paul himself was the inventor and creator of the Eucharist, both as an idea and as a Church institution," despite its explicit presence in all three of the synoptic Gospels and at least by allusion in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, not only in 1 Corinthians. Beyond all that, Paul was an "anti-feminist" and "the originator of Christian anti-Semitism" as well.

THE author is probably understating the case, therefore, when he warns his readers at the very beginning that his preliminary "summary of the findings of this book may seem dogmatic at this stage," and there will be many readers, and not only Christian readers, to whom these "findings" may seem dogmatic not only at that stage but at the end of their reading as well. Maccoby represents his own posi-





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tion, however, as "approaching this question not from the standpoint of faith, but from that of historians," and he contrasts its objectivity with "the influence of traditional religious attitudes . . . in Pauline studies."

In his treatment of most of his predecessors in those studies, Maccoby sounds a polemical tone that does itself sometimes seem, if the expression may be indulged, "Pauline." Thus, New Testament interpreters like John G. Gager and Krister Stendahl "all seem entirely unaware that Judaism already provided a way of salvation for Gentiles"; another group of present-day exegetes is said to manifest "great incompetence and prejudice," with a "stance of ultra-professionalism" that is "phony"; scholars like W. D. Davies, the author of *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1965), "misunderstood" their sources; and "the drama of Paul's confrontation with the High Priest . . . has been entirely missed by commentators." By contrast, Maccoby finds some affinities with the radical hypotheses of the German Protestant Tübingen school of the 19th century, which, with the aid of a Hegelian dialectic, interpreted the emergence of Catholic Christianity as the "synthesis" that came out of the opposition between the Jewish Christianity of Peter and the Gentile Christianity of Paul, although it failed to recognize the implications of this for the understanding of Jesus himself. Above all, he accepts as "very convincing" the historical speculation (which he describes as "detective work") of a few scholars about the Ebionite sect when it substantiates, or seems to substantiate, his thesis.

As I read *The Mythmaker*, I was repeatedly reminded of the acknowledged masterpiece of this genre, Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*: a daring, often even reckless, endeavor to go behind the all-but-unanimous historical evidence to reconstruct the founding of a world religion *wie es eigentlich geschehen ist*, as it really happened, rejecting the a prioris of traditional orthodoxy as tendentious only to superimpose another set of a prioris as scientifically verifiable. Maccoby promises to elaborate the scholarly foundations of his thesis in a forthcoming book, *Paul, Pharisaism, and Gnosticism*. But as his earlier publications make clear, he is interested both in setting the historical record straight (for example, in his *Revolution in Judaea*, about the true character of Pharisaism as against the distortions of it in the Gospels and, from that source, in popular usage) and (perhaps above all in his incisive Cardinal Bea Memorial Lecture, "The Parting of the Ways," published in 1980) in discovering the Christian origins of anti-Semitism as well as its later medieval development (*Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages*, 1982).

Both of these aims are not merely laudable but indispensable for the sake of historical honesty and of interfaith understanding, and all of us are indebted to Hyam Maccoby for his willingness to take on the tough questions. But as a historical scholar, I must confess that I am not convinced either by the neo-Hegelian historical dialectic of the Tübingen school or by Maccoby's theories of radical discontinuity; for at least in my own researches, I have discerned a far more subtle process of continuity-*cum*-discontinuity at work in the history of early Christianity as well as in, for example, the history of the Reformation, which Maccoby characterizes as "the most massive instance" of Christian "antinomianism." As a Christian, I must confess that I am not persuaded that the path to better understanding between the traditions lies in "debunking" either Moses or Paul. And speaking both as a historical scholar and as a Christian, I am confirmed by my reading of *The Mythmaker* in my long-held belief that neither the solo flights of Christian scholars into talmudic territory nor the attempts by Jewish scholars to get at the *status quo ante bellum* behind the New Testament writings have been very successful, but that only the collaboration of critical investigators from various traditions can lead to the kind of historical insight and ecumenical understanding demanded both by scholarship and by faith.

Truth in Science

STORM OVER BIOLOGY: ESSAYS ON SCIENCE, SENTIMENT, AND PUBLIC POLICY. By BERNARD D. DAVIS. *Prometheus Books. 324 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by EDWARD O. WILSON

THE success of science is due in great part to its emphasis on objectivity: the separating of evidence from preconceptions and the willingness to draw conclusions even when they conflict with traditional beliefs. But in recent years the objectivity of science has come under increasing attack, an attack spearheaded by a small group of scientists anxious to create a more congenial setting for their favored political agendas. Their point of view, moreover, has received wide and often favorable attention; few within the scientific community have risen to meet the challenge.

One who has done so is Bernard D. Davis, the Adele Lehman Professor of Bacterial Physiology emeritus at Harvard University. In *Storm Over Biology*, a collection of richly documented essays, Davis traces the histories of the recent controversies, examines the beliefs and methods of the activists, and offers a powerful case for continued adherence to the ideal of strict objectivity, of mind over heart, in scientific research and reportng.

A few of the activist scientists not only doubt the validity of this ideal but have gone so far as openly to promote a politically based science. Davis quotes Richard Lewontin, Steven Rose, and Leon Kamin from their book, *Not in Our Genes* (1984):

> We share a commitment to the prospect of the creation of a more socially just—a socialist—society. And we recognize that a critical science is an integral part of the struggle to create that society, just as we also believe that the social function of much of today's science is to hinder the creation of that society by acting

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to preserve the interests of the dominant class, gender, and race.

The neo-Marxist credo expressed in this and many other writings of the activists is derived from the notion that modern biology is infected with "genetic determinism," the belief that hereditary factors are both all-important in shaping human behavior and irremediable. In the view of the activists, this belief must be expunged if a just society is ever to result.

But the truth is, as Davis shows, that genetic determinism is a straw man. Virtually all biologists are neither genetic determinists nor environmental determinists but rather interactionists: that is, they believe that heredity is important in human cognition and behavior, but also that it interacts with the environment in complex ways to produce the final results. Only by understanding *both* heredity and the environment is it possible to learn enough about human behavior to base the search for a safer and socially just world on reality. The activists, in their Manichean view of the world, simply refuse to believe that most scientists feel this way—as indeed they refuse to believe that most scientists try to be objective in their research agendas—but it happens to be so.

It is not surprising to find that many of the radicals have banded together to carry on a sort of guerrilla warfare against "determinist" and other undesirable forms of research. Science for the People, perhaps the most successful such group, was recently described by one of its members, Richard Levins of Harvard University, as follows:

> Science for the People is one of the few organizations created by the upsurge of the 1960's that survived the ebb of the 1970's and links the struggles of the Vietnam period to the new wave of activity against new military adventurism and reactionary backlash. I think we managed to do this for several reasons: our political struggles are directly linked to our work lives, on a terrain we know well and where our skills are relevant. . . . This makes us effective even when there are few of us. On our own terrain we have the advantage of a better understanding of the major issues than do our adversaries.

Self-doubt, ordinarily thought a virtue in science, has not been allowed to stall the endeavors of Science for the People. As Levins puts it: "Of course, being right is no guarantee of victory in politics, but it helps, and in fact we have won important victories against biological determinism."

The activists have indeed won some victories—if not against genetic determinism, the phantom enemy, at least against ideas and research programs classified as determinist. A dramatic example occurred at the Harvard Medical School in the mid-1970's. Earlier research had disclosed that XYY males, that is, males with an extra Y chromosome in the sex-determining pair, are 10-20 times more likely to be represented in institutions for the criminally insane than in the general male population, that is, among males possessing the XY genotype (1-2 percent of the XYY versus 0.1 percent of the XY). Two questions immediately arose, one scientific and the other clinical: how does this slight behavioral bias appear during development, and what precautions might be taken to diminish it? Stanley Walzer (a psychiatrist) and Park Gerald (a geneticist) undertook a careful, highly confidential study of XYY infant boys, with another group of XY infants followed as controls. Their primary goal was to learn more about the effects of an extra chromosome in human development, with the hope that such knowledge would help to diminish the harmful consequences.

The study, routine in the field of behavioral genetics, was viewed very differently by a small group of activists led by the microbial geneticists Jonathan Beckwith of Harvard Medical School and Jonathan King of MIT. To them, the study was neither good science nor an errand of mercy but an attempt by the ruling class to exploit and stigmatize a segment of the population. Beckwith first lodged a for-

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mal complaint with the Medical School. After a careful review, the faculty concluded that the study was proper and ethical and upheld it by a vote of 199 to 35. In the meantime, however, Beckwith, King, and their associates were holding open meetings and a press conference to denounce the XYY study as socially dangerous and evil. During the following month Walzer and his family received about twenty anonymous, abusive, and sometimes threatening telephone calls. Faced with mounting publicity and the possibility of widening pressure (death to any confidential study), Walzer and Gerald decided to abandon further genetic screening (while continuing with the children already being followed). A triumphant Beckwith wrote in the magazine, *Science for the People*:

> A coalition of Science for the People at Harvard Medical School and outside advocacy groups were able to halt the screening and possible stigmatization of XYY infants at a Harvard-affiliated hospital. While these two examples [the second involved a building expansion at Harvard Medical School] represent only the tip of the iceberg of the ways in which particular ruling-class institutions exploit the surrounding community, the victories should encourage people at other institutions to join in such struggles.

ANOTHER "victory" of the activists, less clear-cut but more important, has been the extensive public discrediting of IQ testing. Here Davis concentrates on the writings of Stephen Jay Gould, a member of Science for the People, who over the past ten years has ferreted out many alleged genetic determinists. In *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981), Gould attempted to destroy once and for all the ideas that general intelligence has meaning, that it can be measured, and hence that it can be reliably thought to be inherited. The book was enthusiastically reviewed by the general press and in literary journals, and received a National Book Critics Circle Award; reviewers commonly expressed relief that a scientist had exposed the dangers of intelligence testing and discredited it on technical grounds. In sharp contrast, reviews in the scientific journals were mostly critical, some harshly so, citing many distortions and errors of fact.

Through the efforts of Gould, Leon Kamin, and others (some of whom are serious scholars with no political ax to grind), the impression has become widespread in the news media and among the public that IQ tests are relatively useless, and that intelligence is not subject to hereditary influence. But what do scientists and educators who actually study the subject think about IQ? In a recent poll by Mark Snyderman and Stanley Rothman (*Public Interest*, Spring 1986), a random sample of 1,020 professionals in the American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education, Behavior Genetics Association, and similar organizations generally agreed on the attributes of intelligence, with three traits—abstract reasoning, problem-solving ability, and capacity to acquire knowledge—named almost unanimously.

Furthermore, the great majority of those polled agreed that some attributes of intelligence not only can be measured, but are "adequately" measured by existing tests. They were of the opinion that IQ as a score on a test does bear a meaningful relationship to intelligence as ordinarily conceived (although the two are by no means identical). Ninety-four percent of respondents indicated that there is reasonable evidence for a significant heritable component of IQ in the American white population, the population on which most relevant studies have been conducted. The mean rating placed on this component of heritability was 0.60, approximately the same that has been reported in a number of independent studies during the past twenty years. A heritability of 0.60 means that 60 percent of the variance measured in the population is due to genetic differences among individuals.

This is not to say that IQ is a refined measure, or that intelligence testing is at a high level of development; researchers have scarcely begun to understand general intelligence and the interlocking of its many components. Nor is it meant to imply that studies on intelligence should be reported with anything but exceptional sensitivity and freedom from bias. The real point is the wide discrepancy between what the critics of IQ are saying and what professionals actually working in the field perceive to be the truth. The suspiciousness toward intelligence research which the critics have been able to inculcate represents a triumph of propaganda over science.

Storm Over Biology is an encyclopedia of such controversies that have ignited along the seismic fault lines of biology and medicine. In addition to the XYY and IQ episodes, Davis explores creationism, minority admissions in medical school, genetic engineering, sociobiology, and other issues. Throughout, in dealing with these controversial matters, Davis manages to hold fast to his own ideal of objectivity and to remain minimally polemical in tone. He himself has at times been the object of attack by the radical Left for positions which can be variously classified as liberal or conservative. (For example, while critical of the excessive lowering of standards in medical schools in the name of affirmative action, he was the first department chairman in Harvard's history to have a black appointed to a tenured professorship.) In fact, Davis is that rarest of birds, an agitated moderate. His style is analytic and balanced to the point of dryness, and he is unfailingly polite to those he confronts: while criticizing Stephen Jay Gould's ideological excursions, for instance, he has also called him a "national treasure" for his popularizations of natural history.

In the foreword to *Storm Over Biology*, Edward Shils concludes that the growing anti-science movement presents more of a long-term threat than is generally recognized. He is probably right, even though the sources of that threat are only loosely connected. They include the radical Left (itself many-faceted) and the religious fundamentalists of the Right, as well as the vague but widely-felt concern on

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the part of the larger public that scientists are out to dominate man and nature, to reduce freedom of choice, and somehow to diminish or abnegate the soul. As Davis points out, the critics of science are further assisted by the externalist movement among historians and philosophers of science, which emphasizes social pressures and the cultural or psychological backgrounds of individual scientists, rather than scientific truth, as the main factors which propel ideas to the fore.

Without doubt, all scientists are influenced by the cultures in which they are raised and the values they have adopted. They are biased in their choice of research problems and the manner in which they report results. But most scientists regard such bias as a vice to be minimized, while only the activists regard it as a virtue to be promoted —so long as it services the "correct" ideology. *Storm Over Biology* is a refreshing contribution precisely because of its reassertion of the ideal of objective truth on which people of different cultures can agree, independently of political differences. It is also courageous in its willingness to apply these principles without flinching where scientific evidence on human diversity comes into conflict with egalitarian assumptions. In this book Davis has presented a powerful argument for the venerable proposition that whereas scientific truth can help to produce a better world, visions of a better world cannot lead to scientific truth.

The Libel Explosion

SUING THE PRESS. By RODNEY A. SMOLLA. *Oxford University Press. 277 pp. $18.95.*

TALKING BACK TO THE MEDIA. By PETER HANNAFORD. *Facts on File. 184 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by DANIEL CASSE

AT ONE TIME in this country, observes the constitutional scholar Walter Berns, there were two

DANIEL CASSE *is managing editor of the* Public Interest.

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ways of dealing with journalists who damaged a man's reputation by publishing false and defamatory statements: pistols at dawn or a horsewhip in the public square. But both dueling and flogging have fallen into disfavor, and the only recourse remaining to a man whose name has been unfairly besmirched is the courts.

As Rodney A. Smolla, a professor of law at the University of Arkansas, makes clear in *Suing the Press*, during the past decade our courts have overflowed with libel suits. His book surveys the most famous of these: Carol Burnett vs. the *National Enquirer*, Ariel Sharon vs. *Time*, William Tavoulareas vs. the Washington *Post*, and William Westmoreland vs. CBS, among others. While few of these cases were landmark libel decisions, they are justly famous for the celebrities involved, the amount of damages demanded by the plaintiffs, and the attention they elicited from the public. The one thing that unites them all is the hatred of the plaintiffs for the press. In this respect, as Smolla correctly observes, they reflect a growing public sentiment that the freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment has been cavalierly abused by the current generation of editors and reporters.

Smolla disagrees with this view. His book, which offers useful descriptions of dozens of libel suits, both major and minor, is a repetitious and poorly written attempt to exculpate the press while turning a blind eye to its malfeasances. In this way it inadvertently provides a fine illustration of the sloppy thinking so often perpetrated by journalists, law professors, and civil libertarians in the name of defending freedom of the press.

THE watershed of American libel law is the 1964 Supreme Court decision in *New York Times* v. *Sullivan*, in which the *Times* was protected from a suit filed by an Alabama police official who claimed he had been libeled by a civil-rights advertisement in the newspaper. That decision established the "actual malice" test for all libel suits by public officials, who from then on had to demonstrate that defamatory statements about them in the press were published with "reckless disregard for the truth." It was an occasion, in the words of one commentator, for dancing in the streets. But while the journalists danced, some students of the Court waited apprehensively to see how far this new doctrine would be pushed.

They did not have long to wait. Within three years the Court extended the rules covering public officials to include suits by "public figures." Soon afterward, the same constitutional privilege was extended to anything in the press about matters of "public or general concern." By 1974, the Court had established a new standard for *private* citizens, who now had to demonstrate not only falsehood but also "negligence" in order to sue successfully for libel—a decision that effectively overturned 200 years of established precedent.

Rodney Smolla views these events as liberating victories for the American press—but he does not limit his gaze to the press alone. Nearly every libel suit mentioned in this book provides Smolla with an opportunity to discourse on social and political issues. His admiration for the *Times* v. *Sullivan* decision, for example, coincides with his belief that it was "a critical battleground in the fight between blacks and whites in the stormy campaign to destroy America's deeply ingrained habits of racism." Similarly, the chapter on the Westmoreland trial quickly metamorphoses into a lecture on Vietnam; the Sharon case offers an occasion to weigh the arguments over the 1982 war in Lebanon; Carol Burnett's successful suit against the *National Enquirer* somehow lends itself to a discussion of the free market under Reagan; and so forth.

As this suggests, Smolla is interested primarily not in legal questions but rather in the social climate that has sparked the "libel explosion." In his view, the 1960's were wonderful years for reform, and the liberation of the laws governing the press was a natural aspect of the general upheaval. But, he writes, "the last ten years have witnessed a transformation of the national character, in which deification of one's self and preoccupation with one's feelings have tended to displace emphasis on political activity." It is this "narcissistic," "sensitive," "thin-skinned" America of the "Ronald Reagan 1980's" that according to Smolla has fostered the wave of anti-media litigation.

Explaining the new distrust of the press by reference to a changed cultural mood, Smolla neatly sidesteps the question of what created that mood. The fact is, of course, that the fundamental shift in First Amendment rulings beginning in the 1960's gave rise to a "new journalism" of investigative reporting and sophisticated muckraking. As the Supreme Court extended protection to virtually every kind of falsehood, harmful inaccuracy, and defamatory statement, the press discovered that it could take brazen risks with impunity. Editors might continue to defend their paper's delinquencies as necessary by-products of freedom, but a misinformed and frequently maligned public began to take a different view.

THAT latter view is perhaps best expressed by Peter Hannaford in *Talking Back to the Media*. Hannaford, chairman of a large Washington public-relations firm and formerly a senior communications adviser to President Reagan, has, in his dealings with the press, done his own fair share of talking back. His book is a survival kit for the uninitiated businessman, politician, or private citizen who suddenly finds himself facing a reporter's microphone.

Needless to say, Hannaford shares none of Smolla's concerns about a public backlash against the media and their constitutional freedoms. On the contrary, he advises his readers to confront the media with their mistakes and, when necessary, to sue. The portrait of the press that emerges from this book is, at best, that of a nuisance, at worst, that of an arrogant, irresponsible, untrustworthy, and potentially damaging adversary.

Hannaford concludes his book with a brief chapter on media ethics, noting with approval that many journalism schools are now including a course on ethics in

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their curricula. The irony of this development would surely be lost on Rodney Smolla who, despite a number of high-minded invocations of public sensitivities, never seriously discusses the issue of press responsibility. Yet it is instructive that only forty years ago this topic so dominated the minds of those who cared about freedom of the press that it gave rise to a report, *A Free and Responsible Press*, which could fairly be said to have spoken for the entire profession. That, of course, was before Justice Brennan, writing for the majority in the *Times* v. *Sullivan* decision, spoke of the need for an "uninhibited, robust, and wide-open debate"—with consequences that Peter Hannaford is not alone in believing have served neither the public good nor the cause of a free press.

Justice White, dissenting in a recent libel suit, wrote that the *Times* decision countenanced two ongoing evils:

> First, the stream of information about public officials and public affairs is polluted and often remains polluted by false information; and second, the reputation and professional life of the defeated plaintiff may be destroyed by falsehoods that might have been avoided with a reasonable effort to investigate the facts. In terms of the First Amendment and reputational interests at stake, these seem grossly perverse results.

An equally perverse result, it must be acknowledged, is that public-relations professionals like Peter Hannaford are now routinely advising their clients to take legal action whenever the press is careless in the exercise of its *Times* v. *Sullivan* rights. As Hannaford himself observes, the recent success rate of plaintiffs in libel suits—as high as 85 percent—is encouraging ever more victims of the press to seek vindication in the courtroom. Smolla, of course, deplores this development, insisting that frequent and expensive litigation against the press bears enormous social costs. And he is right about that—yet for the moment, libel suits against offending publications may be the most effective way to compel American journalists to return to the standards that should govern a free and responsible press.

Soviet Espionage

THE FBI-KGB WAR: A SPECIAL AGENT'S STORY. By ROBERT J. LAMPHERE and TOM SHACHTMAN. *Random House. 320 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by HARVEY KLEHR

For most of Robert Lamphere's fourteen years in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, he specialized in Soviet espionage cases. He was responsible for directing the investigations that culminated in the conviction of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and oversaw numerous other less publicized but important probes that uncovered KGB agents working in the United States. After his departure from the FBI in 1955, Lamphere served as a high-ranking official in the Veterans Administration and then as an insurance executive. He was moved to write this book by indignation. The growing campaign to demonstrate that the Rosenbergs were framed represents, in his view, "the ultimate triumph of the KGB," the organization he battled during his years of service in the FBI.

Since Lamphere began this project in the 1970's, the problem of Soviet espionage has returned to the front pages. Most of today's spies, unlike the Communist ideologues Lamphere confronted in the 1940's and 1950's, are mercenaries. Yet however different their motivations, they too benefit from the fact that it is difficult to prove a charge of espionage unless one of the participants confesses. The Rosenbergs' convictions were obtained thanks to the confessions of their co-conspirators, but their own refusal to talk prevented the success-

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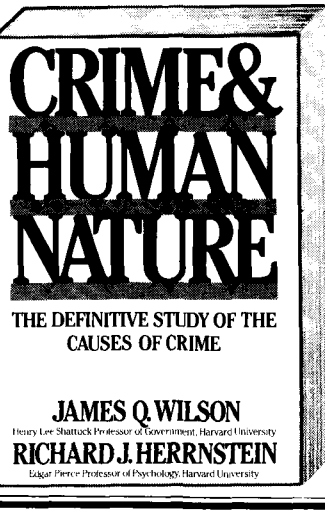
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ful prosecution of most of the members of their espionage ring—even though many were known to the FBI. Lamphere in his fascinating account not only tells the story of how the FBI was able to unravel this spy ring, but indicates the political, legal, and bureaucratic obstacles that hampered investigators. While aficionados of Soviet espionage will find only a few nuggets that have not already been mined by such previous researchers as Allen Weinstein and Ronald Radosh, Lamphere provides a riveting story of how the war against the KGB looked from inside the FBI.

His most important revelation (already aired several years ago) is that the big break came in 1948, when after a long and frustrating effort an old Soviet code was broken by American cryptanalysts. Able at last to read cables sent by the KGB from New York to Moscow in 1944-45, Lamphere was soon on the trail of several Soviet agents. The most important was the British scientist Klaus Fuchs. After his capture and confession, Fuchs led the FBI to his courier, Harry Gold, who implicated David Greenglass, who, in turn, implicated his brother-in-law, Julius Rosenberg. Although the evidence introduced in court against the Rosenbergs was clear and compelling, the most authoritative evidence—the deciphered cables that confirmed their role as KGB agents—could not be used because the FBI did not want to alert the Soviets that it had broken the code.

Not all the deciphered cables led to such spectacular results, and anyway by 1949 the Soviets were on to the breakthrough. Some early leads to members of the Rosenberg spy ring—Max Elitcher and Joel Barr—could not be confirmed; consequently it was two years before the case broke. Another clue, to the identity of a spy in the British embassy in Washington, was not followed up by the British; thus Donald Maclean was able to avoid capture. The British, in fact, emerge as the prime bumblers in Lamphere's account. Besides mishandling the clues leading to Maclean, they ignored Klaus Fuchs's open Communist past and Kim Philby's checkered history. Philby, who worked as a liaison of British intelligence to the FBI in the early 1950's, could have informed the Soviets about the deciphered cables, although Lamphere convincingly argues that still another leak in British intelligence had probably compromised the breakthrough two years earlier. That gave the KGB time to warn vulnerable agents and take measures to limit the damage to its spy networks.

Even when the decoded material led the FBI to an active Soviet agent, the results were not always satisfactory. Late in 1948 one KGB message provided an indication that Judith Coplon, a young woman working in the Justice Department's Foreign Agents Registration section, was a spy. Coplon's position gave her access to sensitive FBI material. While counterintelligence people (like Lamphere) wanted to undertake an extensive investigation of Coplon in the hope that other agents and Soviet spy techniques might be uncovered, Justice Department officials wanted quietly to remove her to limit the damage she could cause.

THE Coplon case illustrates the wrenching conflict between the FBI's counterintelligence and prosecutorial responsibilities. Under pressure to get enough evidence to arrest Coplon quickly, Lamphere planted an FBI document in her office with false information about a supposed double agent working in Amtorg, a Soviet trading company in New York. Coplon took the bait; anxious to inform her Soviet masters that one of their employees was an FBI informant, she was arrested in New York during a meeting with Valentin Gubitchev, a Russian employed by the United Nations. In her possession, in addition to the FBI report, she had a variety of incriminating materials, including handwritten notes on possible KGB recruits in which she mentioned her own Communist sympathies and data slips summarizing other FBI reports.

While Coplon was found guilty in two separate trials—one for stealing documents, the other for conspiracy—the FBI was badly embarrassed by the need to introduce

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into evidence the complete files from which Coplon had excerpted material. Critics complained that the files contained rumors and unsubstantiated charges. More seriously, several government informers, including one in the Soviet embassy in Washington, were compromised by the revelations.

Moreover, the FBI had wiretapped Coplon on the basis of a 1940 letter from President Roosevelt to the Attorney General authorizing such taps in national-security cases. The Supreme Court, however, had earlier ruled that information from such devices was "the fruit of a poisonous tree" and could not be used as evidence in court. In order to justify its original interest in Coplon, the Bureau would have had to reveal its source for her espionage, namely, a deciphered KGB cable. Unable to do so for counterintelligence reasons, it claimed vaguely that its source was "a confidential informant of known reliability," thus feeding the suspicion of the Appeals Court that an illegal wiretap had been responsible.

But the most devastating blow to Coplon's prosecution was the law of search and seizure. Advised by a Justice Department official that it did not have enough evidence to obtain a warrant for Coplon's arrest, the FBI took her and Gubitchev into custody because agents had probable cause to believe a felony was occurring. An Appeals Court invalidated Coplon's lower-court convictions on the grounds that her arrest was improper, and thus prevented the introduction into evidence of any of the documents found on her. Although Congress soon changed the law to authorize arrests without a warrant in espionage cases, an obviously guilty Soviet spy went free. Today Coplon, who married one of her lawyers, owns a trendy restaurant in New York.

THE lack of usable legal evidence was frustrating enough when the FBI knew from wiretaps and deciphered cables that individuals were working for the Soviets. (One of those Lamphere so identifies is Steve Nelson, a high-ranking Communist-party functionary who was accused by congressional investigators of attempting to gain atom-bomb information from scientists at California's Livermore Laboratories during World War II. According to Lamphere, the FBI "overheard conversations" in which Nelson offered his Comintern apparatus to the KGB in 1943.) But frustration was compounded by diplomatic concerns. The State Department often preferred to ship home Soviet nationals caught spying than to prosecute them, in the hopes it might thereby obtain the release of Americans in Soviet jails or avoid diplomatic incidents.

Finally, Lamphere makes it clear that the internal politics of the FBI itself sometimes hampered investigations. He places part of the responsibility directly on J. Edgar Hoover, who was suspicious of the CIA, encouraged subordinates to regard it as a rival, and tried not to cooperate with it. In 1953 Lamphere worked with James Angleton, the CIA's vaunted director of counterintelligence, to lure a one-time KGB agent, Joseph Katz, out of Israel and arrest him. Although Katz had apparently broken with the Soviets, he had never talked about his long career as a spymaster, during which he had supervised Harry Gold among others. Just before the operation began, Hoover, irked at the CIA, killed it.

Although Lamphere clearly admires Hoover, and praises his political acumen, it is evident that Hoover's fondness for draconian punishments of underlings, his encouragement of excessive flattery, and his often petty demands sometimes prevented the FBI from making full use of its resources. Lamphere, for example, was once given a letter of censure when he submitted a partly illegible carbon copy of a document Hoover himself had misplaced. Noting frankly that "some of the FBI discipline verged on thought control," Lamphere also shows how agents and supervisors maneuvered around it. Nevertheless, by the mid-1950's his own tolerance for FBI pettiness had come to an end, and he resigned.

Lamphere's pride in the FBI's accomplishments in counterintelligence during his tenure is offset by

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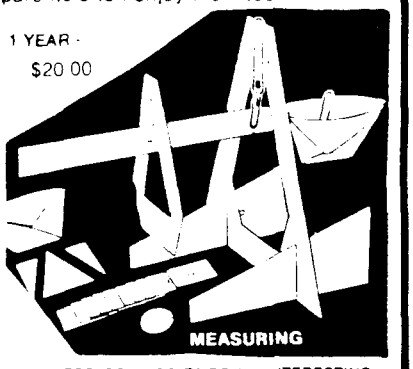

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criticism of others, notably Senator Joseph McCarthy, who used the Communist issue in that period for political ends. He writes that McCarthy deflected public attention from real spies, and that his "approach and tactics hurt the anti-Communist cause" by helping to convince many liberals that charges of Soviet espionage were politically inspired.

But whatever one's final assessment of the harm done by McCarthy, what this book makes abundantly clear is that there was a vast disparity between the number of Americans who worked for the KGB and those who could be tried for doing so. Many Americans who betrayed their country to Joseph Stalin were never legally punished for their acts. That may be the price that a democracy, with its commitment to due process and the rule of law, has to pay. Still, books like Lamphere's are useful reminders of just how real a danger Soviet espionage has posed to the security of the United States.

Blinking Owls

NUCLEAR ETHICS. By JOSEPH S. NYE, JR. *Free Press. 160 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID GRESS

OF THE writing of books on nuclear weapons and morality there is no end. The current debate over nuclear ethics, however, which was provoked in the United States by the Reagan administration's efforts to move toward restoring the strategic balance and by the 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace of the U.S. Catholic bishops, seems to owe more to the public temper than to any actual urgency. Indeed, the truly urgent strategic issues facing the United States, namely, the Soviet development of a missile-defense system and Soviet diplomatic and political moves to disrupt regional stability in the Pacific, Central America, and Western Europe, find little or no reflection in the nuclear debate. But then neither does the question of the morality of defending a particular political order—our own—even though it would seem obvious that to argue for a "just defense" policy requires some acknowledgment of what political values are worth defending, and how.

Nuclear Ethics focuses almost exclusively on the how. Joseph Nye, who is director of the Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, begins by invoking the familiar apocalyptic imagery of recent years, in particular the notion that an all-out nuclear war might "destroy God's Creation," as the Catholic bishops absurdly put it. This imagery would deserve to be taken more seriously had it something to do with the reality of nuclear arsenals today rather than with certain psychological fears and compulsions of liberal middle-class Americans. For as Albert Wohlstetter and Richard Perle never tire of pointing out, the total megatonnage of the U.S. nuclear arsenal peaked in 1960 and is now a quarter of what it was then; the total number of warheads peaked in 1967 and is today about half.

Nor did the much larger and far more inaccurate—hence, by just-war criteria, more immoral—bombs of 1960 deter religious thinkers like John Courtney Murray and Paul Ramsey from discussing nuclear war. Both men insisted that, since war might be a necessity, there was a moral obligation to devise ways of limiting it; to refuse to do so was tantamount to abdicating moral responsibility altogether. Why might war be a necessity? Because certain political values are so important that we are obliged to fight to defend them.

Today, the starting point is the exact opposite. No values, it is said, are important enough to be worth defending with nuclear weapons; therefore, there is no obligation to limit their use. It

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is not that a nuclear holocaust is more likely to occur now than in 1960, or that civilization is in greater danger of destruction—if anything, the opposite is closer to the truth, thanks to smaller yields and increased accuracy—but rather that many post-Vietnam and post-Watergate Americans no longer see national survival and the defense of free institutions as an absolute obligation.

It is to Nye's credit that, although paying excessive deference to the nuclear pacifists and disarmers, he rejects their shrill moralism. This he does by way of a detour into moral philosophy which is one of the best parts of the book. Applying a combination of utilitarian and Kantian ethics, Nye discusses the obligations we owe to foreigners, whether allies, neutrals, or adversaries.

Nye distinguishes four basic views of such obligations. The first, that of the "total skeptic who denies any duties beyond borders," is quickly dismissed. Of the remaining three, "the realist, the state moralist, and the cosmopolitan," the realist places an especially heavy emphasis on order, the state moralist on national survival and self-determination, and the cosmopolitan on universal human values. Nye also recognizes a mixed form, cosmopolitan moralism, shared on the one hand by nuclear abolitionists like Jonathan Schell, who demand disarmament, unilateral if necessary, in what they wrongly believe is the common interest of mankind, and on the other hand by neointerventionists like Charles Krauthammer, who call for U.S. support of anti-Communist insurgencies.

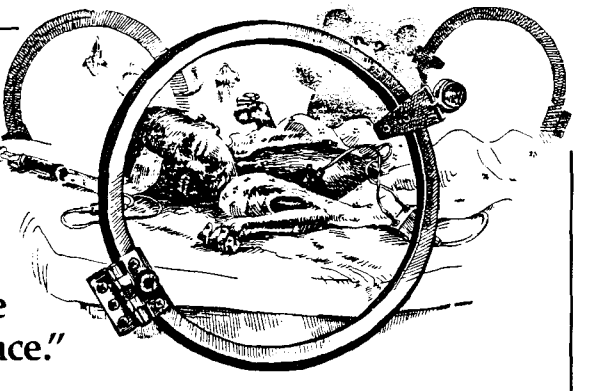
Nye himself adopts a combination of moderate cosmopolitanism and realism, from which he derives two kinds of obligation to foreigners. First, we should "do unto others as we would have them do unto us." Second, we should take responsibility for our actions abroad, because "the prospects for justice within a nation are affected by actions of others outside the nation."

Indeed so—but unfortunately Nye applies his principles rather selectively. Thus, the U.S. abandonment of Vietnam, helped along in part by the antiwar writings of some American scholars, with their erroneous view that the Vietnamese Communists were local nationalists, had very clear consequences for justice in that unhappy country. Accepting responsibility for those consequences and drawing lessons from them would have been a good exercise in illustration of Nye's ethics. Rather than engage in such an exercise, however, Nye in this book takes refuge in the old view that the U.S. involvement in Vietnam was immoral because "idealism tended to blind our leaders to the facts of polycentric Communism and local nationalism."

In his discussion of nuclear ends and means, Nye wisely rejects a policy of deterrence "based on nuclear weapons that threaten disproportionate devastation and harm to innocent people." Unlike the Catholic bishops, however, he does not conclude from this that we should therefore rely on a policy of bluff. Instead, he offers five "maxims of nuclear ethics" that should undergird a policy of nuclear deterrence, properly understood.

The first concerns motive; in Nye's view, the only acceptable reason for possessing a nuclear deterrent, much less devising plans for its use, is self-defense (appropriately expanded to include alliances). The second and third maxims concern means, the second stating that nuclear weapons are not and never will be "normal" weapons, the third that the purpose of any nuclear strategy must be to minimize harm to innocents (i.e., noncombatants). The fourth and fifth maxims concern consequences: according to the fourth we should work to reduce the risks of war in the near term, while according to the fifth we should work to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons in the longer term.

This is all good and unexceptionable, and Nye has done the



"A vivid, erudite, and groundbreaking work on a subject that gnaws at the national conscience."
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Illustration by James Skvarch

The neonatal nurseries of modern hospitals give miraculous life to many babies who would formerly have died. But when that life will be lived tied to support systems, in constant pain, or in unconsciousness, is the gift worth giving? Should an impersonal law decide?

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Special Care
Medical Decisions at the Beginning of Life
Fred M. Frohock
The University of Chicago Press

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cause of common sense a service by opposing these maxims to the apocalyptic rantings of the likes of Jonathan Schell and Barrie Parkins. But the lack of a political dimension, by which I mean an argument as to why we need (or ought) to defend ourselves, is particularly awkward in this final chapter because it prevents Nye from looking at what is actually happening in the world and what we might (morally) do about it.

THE fourth maxim, about the need to reduce the risk of war, is especially ambiguous unless given political content. Nuclear pacifists think they know exactly how to reduce the risk of war, namely, through immediate and unilateral nuclear disarmament. But even within the community of serious nuclear-policy experts there are two radically opposed ways of interpreting this injunction, which depend in turn on radically opposed interpretations of Soviet behavior and goals.

One interpretation, traditionally held by the vast majority of Western politicians and policy-makers since around 1960, is that the risk of nuclear war will be reduced by negotiations and arms control. The underlying assumption here is that the Soviets can be made more peaceful by being shown that we are peaceful. Nye himself takes this line, assuming without much debate that "our approach should include engaging the Soviets in prolonged strategic discussions" and pointing to the "importance of enhancing mutual transparency and communication." Quite apart from the naiveté of expecting "transparency and communication" in dealing with the Soviet system, this position rests on the questionable twin assumptions that Soviet leaders are not fundamentally hostile to the West and that their nuclear strategy does not have the clear purpose of giving them the possibility, at some future date, of dictating the terms of world order.

The other, minority, interpretation of Nye's fourth maxim is that nuclear war will be prevented primarily by our maintaining American power in the form of a credible, survivable strategic force capable of destroying the military strength and infrastructure of the Soviet Union. Only within the context of such a deterrent, and the accompanying political and diplomatic vigilance, do arms-control talks have any significance. Such talks, according to this view, are themselves only an instrument of national-security policy; the goal of that policy can be nothing other than our political survival.

The reason all this is now urgent, as I noted at the outset, is the rise of a Soviet anti-missile force, posing a credible first-strike threat to the land-based U.S. deterrent and a credible threat as well to the possibility that any of our surviving retaliatory forces could reach their targets. Part of the American response to this urgent crisis has been the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Nye devotes a disparaging page-and-a-half to SDI, assuming that the only good defense is a leakproof defense, and ignoring the Soviets' own strategic-defense effort without which SDI would, indeed, be both politically and morally problematic. If, however, one were to take the new threat (which is actually not that new) seriously, the development of an American strategic-defense capability to counter the Soviet effort becomes both politically and morally obligatory, being necessary and appropriate not only to ensure the continued survival of this country but also to fulfill Nye's fourth and fifth maxims of reducing the risk of war in the near term and the reliance on nuclear weapons in the long term.

Nuclear Ethics derives from Nye's work with Graham Allison and Albert Carnesale on avoiding nuclear war, which has led to several publications and an ongoing series of Ford-sponsored Aspen conferences. All three are professors at the Kennedy School of Government and all three share the bureaucratic-technical approach to nuclear weapons and strategy that reached an apogee of sorts in the 1960's when Robert McNamara served as Secretary of Defense. These men call themselves "owls" —as opposed to either "hawks" or "doves." Hawks believe that wars happen for political reasons, and principally when the rulers of an aggressive power judge that their enemies are weak or will not resist. Doves believe that wars happen as a result of unintended provocations, usually as the end product of arms races which follow their own inner dynamic. Owls, finally, think that war, especially nuclear war, will happen, if it does, primarily as a result of a breakdown of communications and perceptions in a time of crisis.

There is a certain smugness in adopting the owlish label, for since the time of Athens owls have always been associated with wisdom, memory, and foresight. But in considering *Nuclear Ethics* one is more often reminded of another metaphorical owlish trait, namely, myopia and a weakened capacity to see things in the light of day. Almost forty years ago, Raymond Aron defined the nature and the challenge of the Soviet-Western struggle as "peace impossible—war unlikely." This still unsurpassed phrase reveals a combination of political, strategic, and moral wisdom which is lacking in Nye's generally sound effort.

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